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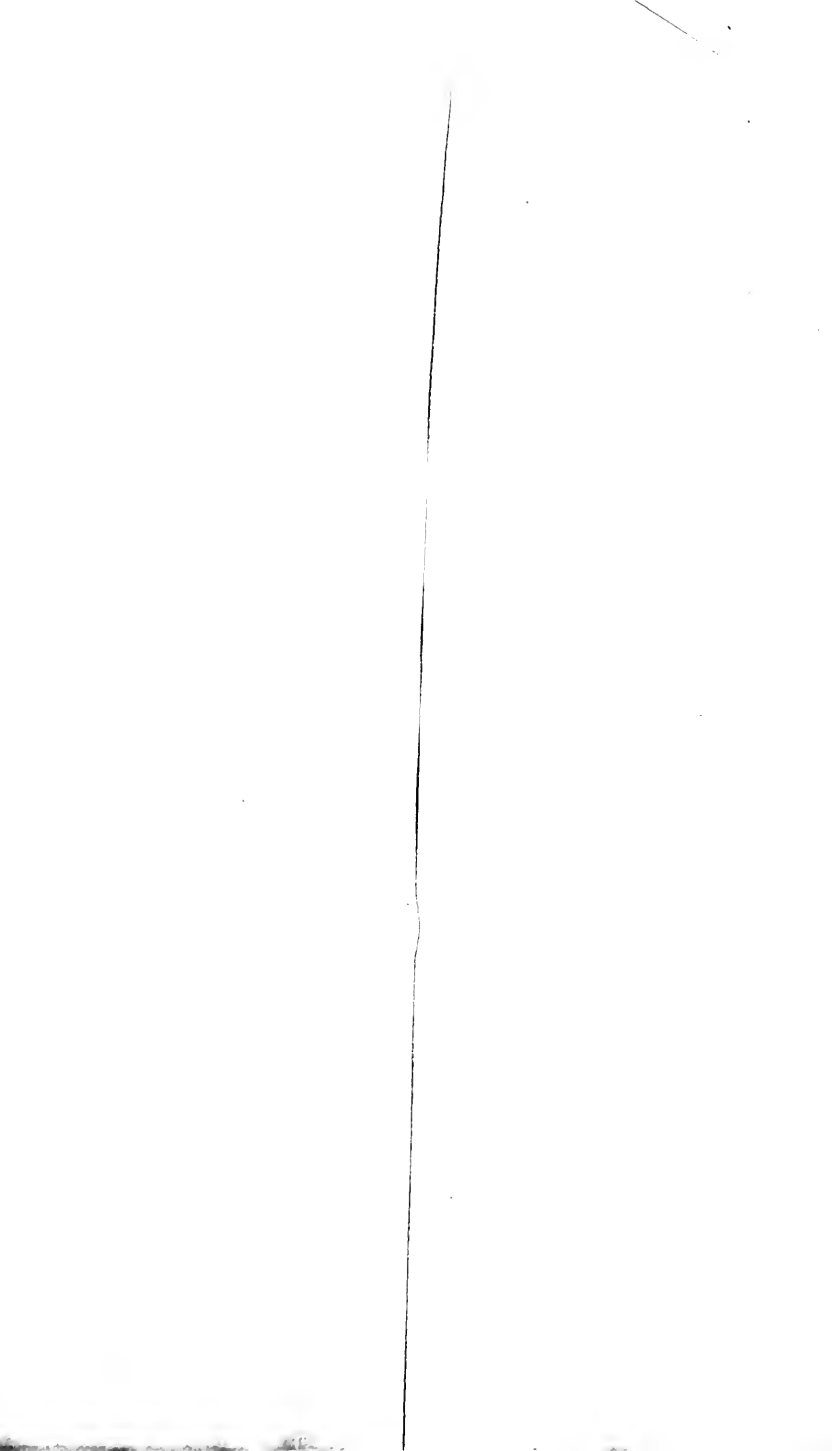
Section

Number

51
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FRONTISPICE.



THE
FRONTISPICE
OF THE
BIBLE

THE
PEARL OF GREAT PRICE;

INCLUDING THE
FAMOUS TITLES OF JESUS CHRIST:

ALSO,

THE BELIEVER'S GOLDEN CHAIN, AND
CABINET OF JEWELS;

COMPRISING A SERIES OF

FAMILY DISCOURSES,

PREACHED IN LONDON, IN THE TIME OF THE AWFUL VISITATION OF
THE GREAT PESTILENCE.

By THE REV. WILLIAM^V DYER.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER;
OR, HEAVEN TAKEN BY STORM.

THE READING OF THIS EXCELLENT BOOK, DR. DODDRIDGE STATES, WAS THE MEANS
OF THE CONVERSION OF COLONEL GARDINER.

By THE REV. THOMAS WATSON.

A New Edition,

EMBELLISHED WITH APPROPRIATE ENGRAVINGS.

L O N D O N :

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1833.

THE LIFE

OF THE

REV. THOMAS WATSON, M. A.

THOMAS WATSON, M. A. was of Emanuel College Cambridge, where he was noted for being a hard student. He was so well known in the city for his piety and usefulness, that though he was singled out by the friendly debate, he yet carried a general respect from all sober persons along with him to his grave. He was a man of considerable learning, a popular but judicious preacher, (if one may judge from his writings,) and eminent in the gift of prayer; of this the following anecdote is a sufficient proof. Once on a lecture day, before the Bartholomew act took place, the learned Bishop Richardson came to hear him, who was much pleased with his sermon, but especially with his prayer after it, so that he followed him home, to give him thanks, and earnestly desired a copy of it. "Alas!" said Mr. Watson, "that is what I cannot give, for I do not use to pen my prayers; it was no studied thing, but uttered *pro re nata*, as God enabled

me, from the abundance of my heart and affections." Upon which the good bishop went away, wondering that any man could pray in that manner extempore. After his ejection he continued the exercise of his ministry in the city, as Providence gave opportunity, for many years; but his strength wearing away, he retired into Essex, and there died suddenly in his closet at prayer.

In the Collection of Farewell Sermons, there are three by Mr. Watson, namely, two delivered August 17th, and the third on the Tuesday following. The first is on John xiii. 34. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another," &c. It discovers much of the spirit of the gospel, particularly in recommending love to enemies and persecutors. The second is on 2 Cor. vii. 1. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves. In the former part of it he insists largely on the ardent affections of a right gospel minister towards his people. This head he closes thus, "I have now exercised my ministry among you for almost sixteen years; and I rejoice and bless God, that I cannot say, The more I love you, the less I am loved. I have received many signal demonstrations of love from you. Though other parishes have exceeded you in number of houses, yet I think none for strength of affection. I have with much comfort observed your reverend attention to the word preached. You rejoiced in this light, not for a season, but to this day. I have observed your zeal against error in a critical time; your unity and amity;

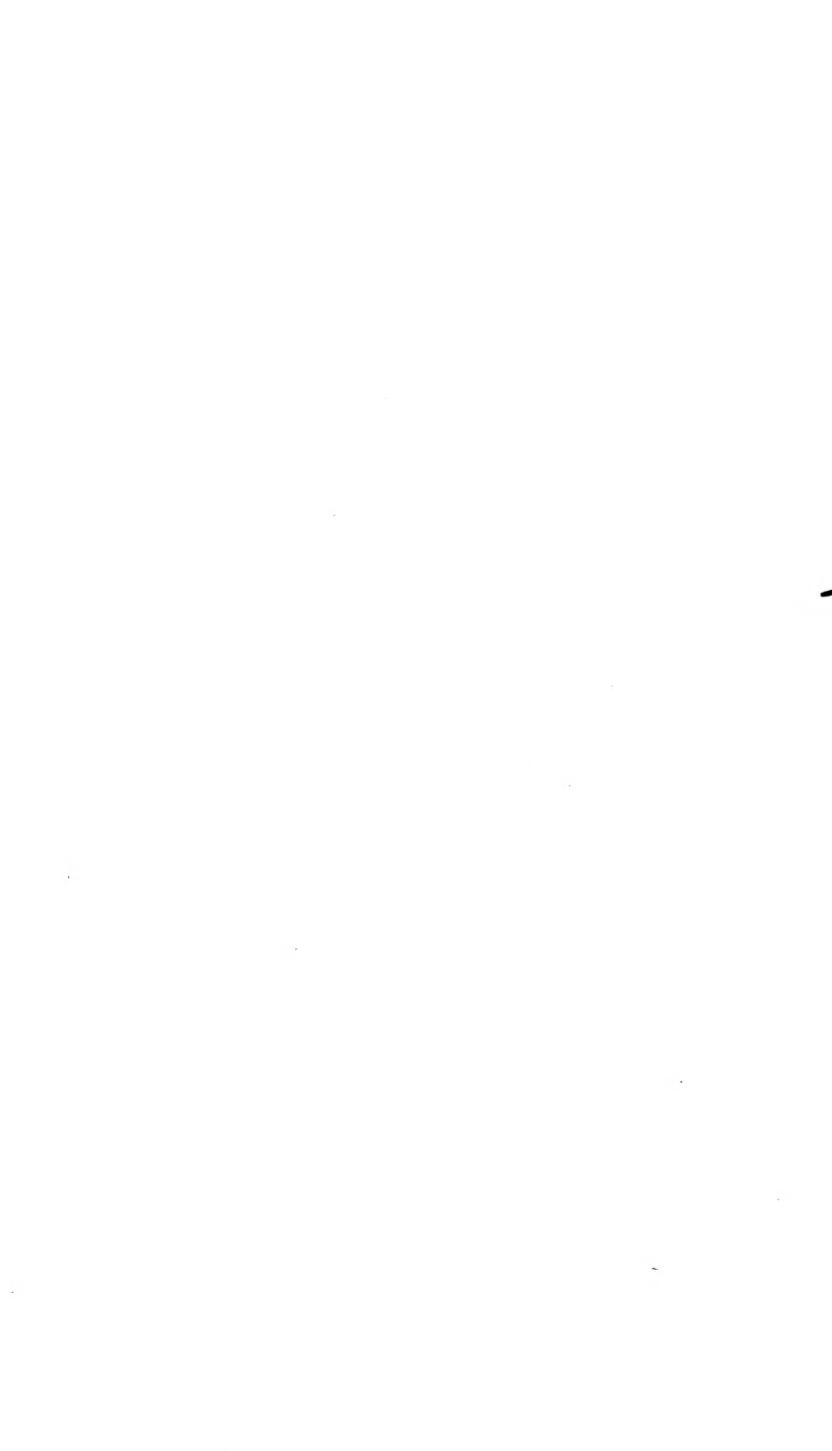
this is your honour. If there should be any interruption in my ministry among you, though I should not be permitted to preach to you again, yet I shall not cease to love you and to pray for you. But why should there be any interruption made? Where is the crime? Some indeed say that we are disloyal and seditious. Beloved, what my actions and sufferings for his majesty have been, is known to not a few of you. However, we must go to heaven through good report, and through bad report; and it is well if we can get to glory, though we press through the pikes. I shall endeavour that I may still approve the sincerity of my love to you. I will not promise that I shall still preach among you, nor will I say I shall not. I desire to be guided by the silver thread of God's word and providence. My heart is toward you. There is, you know, an expression in the late act, That we shall now shortly be as though we were naturally dead. And if I must die, let me leave some legacy with you." Then follow twenty admirable directions, well worthy the frequent perusal of every Christian. He closes them thus: "I beseech you treasure them up as so many jewels, in the cabinet of your breasts; did you carry them about you, they would be an antidote to keep you from sin, and a means to preserve the zeal of piety flaming upon the altar of your hearts. I have many things yet to say to you, but I know not whether God may give me another opportunity. My strength is now almost gone. I beseech you let these things make deep impression on all your souls.

Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.'

The last discourse, August 19th, is on Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye surely it shall be well with the just ; woe to the wicked," &c. Many excellent passages might be quoted from this sermon as well as from the preceding ; but as so many of this author's works are before the public, and are still so well known, the editor must restrain his inclination.

A BRIEF NOTICE
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM DYER.

THE author of this volume was, during the former part of his ministerial life, a preacher of the Gospel at Chessham and Chouldsbury. He preached in London in the time of the plague. From his writings he appears to have been a man of great piety, and a serious fervent preacher. In the latter part of his life he inclined to the Quakers, and was buried among them, in Southwark, April, 1696, aged sixty.



CHRIST'S

FAMOUS TITLES.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

OUT of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, comes better and sweeter honey, than out of Sampson's lion; that is the sweetest honey we suck out of Christ's hive: for the face of none is so comely in a saint's eye, as the face of Christ: and the voice of none is so pleasant in a saint's ear, as the voice of Christ. Oh Christian! the God whom thou servest is so excellent, that no good can be added to him; and so infinite, that no good can be diminished in him. He makes happy, and is not the less happy; he shews mercy to the full, and yet remains full of mercy. Oh come eat and drink abundantly! Oh beloved, there is no fear of excess here, though one drop of Christ be sweet, yet the deeper the sweeter.

The wine that Christ draws, is the best wine that a Christian drinks: the whole book of Canticles is bespangled with the praises of Jesus Christ: the subject matter of this book is a declaration of the mutual intercourse of love and affection between Christ and his church: what spiritual entertain-

ment is given on both sides, with the sweet content they have in each other's beauty : here you may see the King in his glory, the spouse in her beauty : here you may see Christ giving her sweet promises, adoring her with sundry excellencies, communicating his love, and commending her graces : here you may also see the church even ravished with the consideration and contemplation of Christ's love and beauty ; his beauty is taking, his love is ravishing, his voice is pleasing, his goodness is drawing, his manifestations are enticing ; he is the beloved Son, and the Son of love ; he is nothing but love to those that are his love.

But I shall no longer entertain you with a crumb at the door, but carry you to the chapter out of which my text is taken, and so lead you to the cabinet where the jewel lieth.

Brethren and beloved, you have a glorious description of Christ in this chapter, and that from ver. 10. to 16. where the spouse is setting forth the riches, the dignity, the excellency, the beauty, the majesty, the glory, the preciousness, and loveliness of Jesus Christ. "He is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers : his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with beryl : his

belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold : his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." And thus she sets forth her beloved, and at last winds up all with this rare expression, "He is altogether lovely."

This text is a sacred cabinet, which contains in it,
First, The Jewel Christ, in this word, HE.

Secondly, The price of the Jewel, *Altogether lovely*.

The observation, or doctrine, is this, That Jesus Christ is infinitely and superlatively lovely. He is the most amazing and delightful object. The very name of Jesus Christ is as precious ointment poured forth. It is said, that the letters of his name were found graven upon Ignatius' heart. Jesus Christ is in every believer's heart, and nothing can do better there ; for "he is altogether lovely." That Jesus Christ is thus transcendantly lovely, will appear in four manner of ways ;

First, By titles,

Secondly, By types.

Thirdly, By resemblance.

Fourthly, By demonstrations.

I shall only speak to the first of these. Our Lord Jesus hath seven famous and lovely titles, which are as so many jewels of his crown.

First, The Desire of all Nations.

Secondly, The King of kings.

Thirdly, The Mighty God.

Fourthly, The Everlasting Father.

Fifthly, The Prince of Peace.

Sixthly, The Elect Precious.

Seventhly, Wonderful.

WE will begin with the first of these famous titles, *viz. The Desire of all Nations.*

This title you have in the second of Haggai and 7th verse: "And the Desire of all Nations shall come." But you shall say, How is Christ the Desire of all Nations? Do not all the nations abhor him and say, We will not have this man to rule over us? "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed," Psal. ii. 2. The kings of the earth are afraid, lest Christ's government should unking them: the rulers are jealous, lest it will depose them from their dignities: even the reformers, that have adventured all to set it up, are jealous, lest it will encroach upon their power and privileges: kings are afraid of it, and think themselves but half kings, where Christ doth set up his power and discipline: lawyers are afraid of it, lest it should take away their gain, and the laws of Christ should overtop the laws of the land: the people are afraid of it, lest it should compel them to subjection to the law and way which their souls abhor. Oh, how long hath the world rebelled against Jesus Christ, and his government!

But tell me, Have the people gained any thing by resisting Christ, his gospel and government? by hating his servants, and by scorning his holy ways? or doth it make the crown sit faster on the heads of kings? I shall leave you to judge of this.

But, beloved, for all this, Jesus Christ is the Desire of all Nations.

And that I shall shew in five particulars.

Though Jesus Christ be not actively desired by all nations, yet he is rightly stiled, *the Desire of all Nations*.

First, Because he is most desirable in himself, and all things that are desirable are in him.

Beauty is in Christ, bounty is in Christ, riches and honour are in Christ, Prov. viii. 18.

Jesus Christ is the treasure hid in the gospel, the pearl of great price : he is the sun in the firmament of the scriptures, whom to know is everlasting life : he is a spring full of the water of life, a hive of sweetness, a magazine of riches, a river of pleasures, wherein you may bathe your souls to all eternity.

Oh ! he is fulness and sweetness. “The chiefest among ten thousand,” Cant. v. 10. “He is more precious than rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to him,” Prov. iii. 15.

Alas ! what are all the crowns and kingdoms of the world, all the thrones and sceptres of kings to Christ ! I say what are the treasures of the east, the gold of the west, the spices of the south, and the pearls of the north to him ? These, or whatsoever thou dost imagine, are not to be compared unto the blessed Jesus ! Beloved, the glories and excellencies of Christ excel all others. As all waters meet in the sea, and as all the lights meet in the sun ; so all the perfections and excellencies of all the saints

and angels meet in Christ. Nay, sirs, Christ hath not only the holiness of angels, the loveliness of saints, and the treasure of heaven, but also the fulness of the Godhead, the riches of the Deity are in him : Col. i. 19. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," fulness of grace, fulness of knowledge, fulness of love, fulness of glory. He is lovely to the Father, lovely to the angels, lovely to the saints, and lovely to the soul. And therefore he may well be called the Desire of all Nations, for all desirable things are in him.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is called the Desire of all Nations, because his desire is after all nations, though he hath no need of them ; he hath thousands of angels before him, and ten thousand daily minister unto him : yet such infinite love doth he bear to the sons of men in whom there is no loveliness, that he himself saith, "My delight is with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. That our Lord Jesus hath a strong desire after the nations to convert them, and save the nations, will appear by three things :

1st, By what he did before he came into the world.

2ndly, By what he did when he was in the world.

3rdly, By what he doth now when he is out of the world.

First, Our Lord Jesus had a great desire after the poor nations before he came into the world, or else he would never have left his crown, his royal court, his Father's bosom, his glorious robes, to come into this world to be spit upon by men, and

MATTHEW III 1



JOHN PREACHING.

London, Published by Tho^s Kelly, 17, Paternoster Row

to be murdered by men; nay, he did not only become a laughing-stock to men, but a gazing-stock to angels. Now, beloved, do ye not think that Jesus Christ had a great desire after the nations' good, that he would leave all his glory, and greatness, and pomp, and riches, to come into this world, to be poor, to be hungry, to be weary, to be tempted, to be betrayed, to be sold?

But you may perhaps say, that Christ little thought his own countrymen would have shed his blood, and that one of his own family would betray him.

Why, beloved, do you think he did not know it? yea, he knew it before he came into the world, how he should be used in the world, that the Jews would crucify him, and that Judas would betray him, John vi. 46. He knew it from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. Christ knew it before he came from heaven, what coarse entertainment he should have upon earth. Now, beloved, put all this together, and tell me, had not Jesus Christ a desire after us before he came to us, that he would uncrown himself to crown us; and put off his robes, to put on our rags; and come out of heaven to keep us out of hell? He fasted forty days, that he might feast us to all eternity. He came from heaven to earth, that he might send us from earth to heaven.

The Son of God became the Son of man; that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God; and all this he did to save the nations.

Secondly, He had a longing desire after the nations when he was in the world.

Oh! Christ would fain have saved the nations, and healed them, and enlightened them; therefore he sends forth his apostles, Matth. xxviii. 19. and bids them, "Go and teach all nations:" the people were in his eyes, and upon his heart; and so in Matth. xxii. Christ sends forth his servants, once, twice, thrice, as if he would take no denial, but they would not come. Nay, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ did not only send others to poor souls, to beseech them, to entreat them to come in, to repent, and to believe in their Saviour, that their souls might be saved: but he went himself and desired them: nay, that is not all, beloved, he cried to them, and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," John vii. 37.

Oh! how earnest was Jesus Christ with poor souls to come to him. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. x. 28. So in Luke xiv. 23. "Go to the high ways, and compel them to come in, that my house may be full."

Do you see this, Christians, what vehement desires Jesus Christ had after the nations and souls of men, that he might ever make them happy, when he was in the world, and he hath the same desire still. How often would Jesus Christ have healed the Jews, that poor nation, as he himself speaketh in Matth. xxiii. 37. "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen ga-

thereth her young ones, and ye would not." Nay when he hath done all this, he doth not leave them, but weeps over them: his eyes were wet because their eyes were dry. So this is clear from what Christ did when he was in the world, that he desired much the healing and converting of nations.

First, In his bearing with them.

Secondly, In his proffers unto them.

Thirdly, He hath a great desire after the nations, now he is out of the world, though he be gone to heaven, and entered into glory, and there sitteth at the right hand of the Father; yet, I say, his desires are as much after poor souls as ever.— This will appear by two things:

First, In his forbearance and long-sufferance.

Oh! how long hath Christ borne with the sinful nations, and yet he bears with them still, notwithstanding they have broke his laws, and despised his gospel, and contemned his ordinances, and shed his saints' blood, grieved his Spirit, and abused his mercies: this and much more have they done, and yet he spared them that he might be gracious to them, Isa. xxx. 1, 8. "And therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious to you."—"Therefore will he be exalted, that he may shew mercy."

Now, beloved, do you think that Jesus Christ would take all this at the nations' hands, but that he is unwilling to destroy them, and most willing to save them.

Secondly, His love appears, not only by his bearing with them, but by his proffers to them.

Oh beloved, how doth God stand day after day, month after month, and year after year, proffering himself, his Son, his mercy, his love, his grace, and his glory, to poor souls!

Many have the space of repentance, who have not the grace of repentance.

Now, my brethren, by these things you may see that Jesus Christ hath a great desire after the nations.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is called the Desire of all Nations, because it is he only that can make any person, family, or nation, truly desirable.

Oh! beloved, what is the reason that the Lord of hosts prefers his people before all the sons of men? The Lord prefers his little remnant before all the world besides, Exod. xix. 5. "You shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."—"The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26. Though his neighbour be a prince, a king, or emperor, or a pope, yet if he be more righteous, he is more excellent than he; they are but base born. Believers be these worthies, of whom the world was not worthy, Heb. xi. 38. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," 1 Pet. ii. 6. Believers are not only diligent Christians, but excellent Christians.

Now, what is the reason, beloved, that the saints

are thus excellent above all others? Is it for their birth, breeding, or learning, or riches, or greatness, or honour? No, no, it is for none of these: but if you would know the reason, it is because Christ is formed in them, and married to them; they have the new name, the new nature, the new heart, the new spirit. Oh, this is the reason, if there were any thing beside Christ that would make any nation, or family, or person truly desirable, it must be either birth, or greatness, or learning, or riches, or beauty, or wisdom, or strength: now all these do not make any one desirable, for if they did, then those that sit upon the nations would be the most desirable persons under heaven, because they have the most of these. But for this, see Dan. iv. 17. And settest over them the basest of men. Rev. xvii. 15. “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues;” so that none of these can do it, but Christ only, Rev. v. 10.

He hath made us unto our God, kings and priests. Oh! Christ hath made every believer a king, it is Christ's beauty that makes us beautiful; it is his riches that makes us rich; it is his righteousness that makes us righteous; he only makes us truly honourable, and desirable. Well may Christ be called the Desire of all Nations: it is he that can make a nation desirable.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ is called “the Desire of all Nations,” because all nations stand in need of him: Nay, not only all nations, but all persons,

young and old, rich and poor, high and low. He that will be saved, must have a Saviour to save him, or else he can never be saved. The apostle tells us, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is their salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved." And Christ saith, John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" So that not only all nations, but all persons stand in need of him.

You may go to heaven without health, without wealth, without honour, without pleasure, without friends, without learning; but you can never go to heaven without Christ.

What will you do, if you begin to die naturally, before you begin to live spiritually?

If the tabernacle of nature be taken down, before the temple of God be raised up: if your paradise be laid waste, before the tree of life be set up in it; if you give up the ghost, before you ever receive the Holy Ghost; if the sun of your life be set within you, before the Sun of Righteousness shines upon you; if the body be fit to be turned into the earth, before the soul be fit to be taken to heaven: if the second birth have no place in you, the second death shall have power over you.

Though the nations need nothing more than Christ, yet they slight nothing more than Christ.

Tell me how you will live when you die, that are dead whilst you live.

Oh, beloved, is it not sad that the nations should

resist Christ, his gospel and government as they do ?

Indeed, if men might be their own judges, then Christ had no enemies, we are all his friends.

If the Jews might so have been their own judges, it was not the Son of God whom they crucified, but an enemy to Cæsar. It was not Paul a saint they persecuted, but one that they found to be a pestilent fellow : some men will say now, they do not persecute the saints of God, but seditious lunatics : but God will shortly take off the vail of hypocrisy from their faces.

Oh grieve for them, that cannot grieve for themselves !

And thus you see that all nations stand in need of Christ, who is the Desire of all Nations.

Fifthly, Our Lord Jesus is called the Desire of all Nations, because when he sets up himself in any one as their desire, then they run after him, and count nothing too dear for him : so the church of God, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. " The desire of our soul is to thy name ; with my soul have I desired thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

Oh ! when the Desire of all Nations once setteth up himself in the soul, then he becomes the desire of the soul.

When he had thus endeared himself to their souls, they count nothing too dear for him, all shall be at his command ; their gold, their silver, their strength, their lives, Rev. x. 11. " They loved not

their lives unto the death." So that, beloved, let men be enemies to Jesus Christ, yet as soon as Christ sets up himself in their hearts, they will love him, own him, serve him, and suffer for him.

Now, sirs, put all these together, and it will fully prove Christ to be the Desire of all Nations.

I shall make but a short use of it, and so conclude.

Is it so that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Desire of all Nations, and that all things desirable are in him? Oh then, let me beg of you, oh let me beseech you, for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, make Christ Jesus the desire of your souls.

He is the Desire of all Nations, and shall he not be the desire of your souls? whom will ye love, if not the KING of saints? whom will ye long for, if not for the Desire of all Nations? whom will ye prize, if not the Prince of Peace? He is the SON OF GOD, the second Person in the glorious Trinity, before whom angels and archangels, and all the host of heaven bow. He is the glory of glories, the crown of crowns, the heaven of heavens; he is a light in darkness, joy in sadness, riches in poverty, life in death: it is he that can resolve all your doubts, secure you in danger, save your souls, and bring you to glory, where all joys are enjoyed. Oh therefore, let all the glory of your glory be to give all glory, and yourselves to Him. So much, or so little for this time.

THE KING OF KINGS.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE.—*That JESUS CHRIST, is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

I now proceed to the second title, which is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is King of kings. Augustine desired to have seen three things before he died, *First*, Rome in her glory and purity. *Secondly*, Paul, in the pulpit preaching. *Thirdly*, Christ in the flesh upon earth.—Cato, the heathen, repented himself of three things, *First*, that ever he spent a day idle. *Secondly*, That ever he revealed his secrets to a woman. *Thirdly*, That ever he went by water when he might have gone by land.—Thales gives thanks for three things, *First*, That he was endued with reason, and was not a beast. *Secondly*, That he was a man, and not a woman. *Thirdly*, That he was a Grecian, and not a Barbarian.—And I, poor I, desire to see three things before I die, *First*, Babylon's ruin. *Secondly*, Christ's reigning. *Thirdly*, Satan's binding.—The angel hath sworn by him that lives for ever and ever, “That time should be no longer,” Rev. x. 6.—Who will not believe his sacred oath?—did he say it?—No, he swore it; how? by himself? No, by HIM that lives for ever.—What?—that time must be a little?—No; it must be no longer—The time shall be no longer.—The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come,

said the prophet in Mal. iii. 1.—They who keep the word of God's patience, God will keep them in the hour of temptation.

Well, the second title of Jesus Christ is, **KING** of kings; I pray you take notice of it, it is now to be handled; in Rev. xix. 16. "He hath a name written," saith the text, "**KING** of kings and **LORD** of Lords." Here is a title now, **KING** of kings.—Beloved, Jesus Christ is a threefold king.

First, His enemies' King.—*Secondly*, His saints' King.—*Thirdly*, His Father's King.

The first, he rules over.—The second he rules in.—The third he rules for.

I shall begin with the first, and take them in order.

First, Christ is his enemies' King, that is, he is King over his enemies. Christ is a King above all kings, and over all kings, and therefore the Scripture calls HIM "King of kings," as you have it in 1 Tim. vi. 15. Christ is a King above all kings: for if he were not a King above all kings, he could not be a King over all kings. Now that he is a King above all kings, two Scriptures prove it, Psal. lxxxix. 27. Saith God the Father there, "I will make my first-born higher than the kings of the earth." Now, who is the first-born? Why, it is Jesus Christ; as he is elsewhere called, "the first-born of every creature."—"Now," saith God, "I will make my first-born higher than the kings of the earth,—higher in glory, higher in power; higher in majesty.—So in Rev. chap. x. ver. 5. There Christ is called, "the Prince of the earth."—

Alas! alas! what are all the mighty men, the great, the honourable men of the earth to Jesus Christ! they are but like a little bubble in the water; for if all the nations, in comparison to God, be but as the drop of the bucket, or the dust of the balance, as the prophet speaks in Isa. xl. 15. Oh how little then must be the kings of the earth.

Nay, beloved, Christ Jesus is not only above the kings of the earth, and higher than kings, but he is higher than the angels; yea, he is the head of angels; and therefore all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship him, he is the head of all angels, Col. ii. 12. "He is the head of all principalities and powers," which includes angels. And in Heb. i. 6. "Let all the angels of God worship him." God will have the angels worship Christ, as well as men.

Oh, sirs, Christ is a King, before whom angels veil their faces, and kings of the earth do cast down their crowns.

Again, as he is a King above all kings, so he is a King over all kings too. Jesus Christ is an universal King. He is the King over all kingdoms, over all nations, over all governments, over all powers, over all people, Dan. vii. 14. "There was given to him," saith the text, "dominion, and power, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, were to serve him." — Now, who was this? In the 13th verse it is clearly meant of Jesus Christ, "All people, and all na-

tions, and languages, and kingdoms were to serve him :”—so that you see Christ is not only King of saints, but King of nations too ; and therefore you find in Psal. ii. 8. (it is a text often read, but little observed,) “ Ask of me,” saith the Father, “ and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”—The very heathen are given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

As the Lord Jesus Christ hath all the kingdoms of the earth given to him ; so likewise he hath all power given to him ; or else what would he do with a kingdom, in Matth. xxviii. 18. “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”—Oh sirs, here is a text that should revive the hearts of saints.” “ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” saith Christ to his apostles.—So that it is he that binds kings in chains, and princes in fetters of iron, as the last psalm, saving one, speaks. It is he that suffers no man to do them wrong ; yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes, and breaks mighty kings in pieces for the saints’ sake, Psal. cv. 13. And therefore it is he that over-rules kings, and overcomes the kings of the earth, that make war with the saints, in Rev. xvii. 14. The ten kings made war with the Lamb, but the Lamb prevailed : and why ? Because he was King of kings, and Lord of lords. This is the first, Jesus Christ is his enemies’ King, that is, he is a King above their kings, and over their kings.

Secondly, As Jesus Christ is his enemies' King, so he is his saints King ; I will give you two Scriptures to prove it, though I need not, yet I will, because of making of things very clear as I go on, Rev. xv. 3. There Jesus Christ is called the saints' King, "Thou King of saints."—So also in Matth. xxi. 5. "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh."—So that by these two Scriptures, you see Jesus Christ is King of saints. Now, beloved, I beseech you here to mind me : Jesus Christ you see, is King of the bad, and of the good ; but as for the wicked, he rules over them by his power and might ; but the saints, he rules in them by his Spirit and graces ; now to this the Scripture witnesseth, that Jesus Christ rules in the saints, and is the King of the saints ; and therefore it tells them, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you the hope of glory," and elsewhere, "Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be reprobates,"—Mark here, Christ must be in you, "Christ in you the hope of glory."—So in Psal. xxiv. 7. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in."—Here Christ is called the King of glory ; and the psalmist calls upon men to open their hearts that the King of glory may come in : so in Rev. iii. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."—Oh this is Christ's spiritual kingdom, and here he rules in the hearts of his people, here he rules over their

consciences, over their wills, over their affections, over their judgments and understandings, and nobody hath any thing to do here but Christ; it is Christ that rules over the consciences and judgments of men; and therefore he is called the King of saints. It is true, other kings may bear rule over the estates of men; but as for the soul, that only belongs to Christ; and therefore believers are said to be all glorious within. "The King's daughter," which is the church, in Psal. xlv. 13. The King of glory rules there, and dwells there; you know God dwells in the highest heavens, and in the humble hearts. Christ is not only the King of nations, but King of saints; the one he rules over, the other he rules in.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is his Father's King too, and so his Father calls him: God calls Christ his King, in Psal. ii. 6. "I will set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Well may he be our King when he is God's King. But you may say, How is Christ the Father's King? Because he rules for his Father: there is a twofold kingdom of God committed to Jesus Christ; Pray, mark, sirs.

First, A spiritual kingdom, by which he rules in the hearts of his people, and so is King of saints.

Secondly, A providential kingdom, by which he rules the affairs of this world, and so he is King of nations. Now, beloved, the Scripture saith, "That the Father hath put all things in Christ's hands," John iii. 35. And the apostle tells us, God hath put all things under his feet. The Father judgeth

no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and he hath appointed him over his own house - now, as Christ hath all, so he doth all, and rules all for his Father; and therefore the Father calls him his servant; Isai. xli. 2. "Behold my servant;" and in the other text, "my King," because he rules for his Father, and doeth his Father's will: so that, beloved, in these three respects Christ is a King. Now I shall lay down some things wherein the Lord Jesus doth infinitely excel all other kings of the earth.

First, Jesus is a King, that, in a spiritual sense, makes all his subjects kings. He hath a crown of glory for every subject. Oh, what a glorious King is this! Now, that Christ makes all his subjects kings, see Rev. v. 10. saith the church there, "Who hath made us unto our God kings and priests."

Oh, sirs, it is better to be a member of Christ than the head of a nation! Oh, how infinitely happy are all Christ's subjects! they be all kings, all heirs, all favourites, all sons, all true believers are so; the believer is the only happy man. Alas! where is there such a king to be found, that makes all his subjects kings? There are many kings that undo their subjects, but Christ makes his subjects kings: many kings make their subjects beggars, but Christ makes his subjects kings: many kings put their subjects to death, but Christ died that his subjects might live: they give their subjects titles, but Christ gives all his subjects grace and glory.

Sirs, in a word, this is the greatest nobility, to be the servant of the great God; he is nobly descended who is born from above. Oh, how many lords hath that man who hath not Christ for his Lord! every sin is his lord, and every lust lords it over him. Now where Jesus Christ comes to be King, he makes them kings to his Father, and kings over their lusts. Now, beloved, here is the blessedness and happiness of our King, he makes us all kings, and gives all crowns of glory.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is a most just and righteous King; he reigns in righteousness, he brings peace by righteousness, he makes us righteous, and therefore he is called, "The LORD our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. Now, beloved, other kings often deal unjustly, they bear the sword to execute wrath upon well-doers, and strengthen the hands of evil-doers; justify the wicked, and condemn the godly; and break oaths, and falsify covenants; and many times they oppress their subjects, and wrong their people; and therefore the Scripture says, "When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." Prov. xxix. 2. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked bear rule the people mourn."—But now, beloved, Jesus Christ, as he is a righteous King, so he rules in righteousness, and thou shalt have nothing but righteous dealing from him: mind this text of Scripture, which infinitely speaks out Christ's righteous dealing with poor souls, in Rev. xv. 13. "Just and true are thy ways." Mark who are just and true here.

Why, it is the King of saints; “just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” Justice and truth well becometh the King of saints. In Prov. iii. 27. it is said, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” speaking of wisdom, which is meant of Christ. Oh, what a golden King is here! what a glorious King is here! he is just and true, and all his ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Oh, sirs, this is the excellency of Christ, he oppresseth nobody, he wrongs nobody, therefore he is called just and true, he infinitely excels all the kings of the earth in righteousness: he is a righteous King, and deals for nothing but for righteousness.

Thirdly, Christ is a King that liveth for ever, and reigns for ever: other kings they are but of yesterday, they be dead and gone; what is become of all those great and mighty kings we read of? Why, they be gone like a tale, like a dream. But it is not so with the King of saints: the Lord is King for ever, he reigns for ever; and therefore the apostle calls him King immortal, eternal, as you may see in 1 Tim. i. 17. Christ is there called a King immortal, because he lives for ever. So in Heb. vii. 25. speaking of Christ, “Who ever lives,” saith he, “to make intercession for us.” Now, beloved, here is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, he lives for ever: other kings be dead, and their subjects may do what they will, but Jesus lives for ever.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ is a King that hath a perfect knowledge of all his subjects: Oh, sirs,

kings, and princes, and states, do not know all their subjects; nay, they know very few: alas! they do not know a quarter of them, the poor subjects are unknown to them, they be not acquainted with all the wrongs, and wants, and miseries, that their poor subjects lie under. We are unknown most of us to our prince; but now, here is the excellency of Christ, he hath a perfect knowledge of all his subjects, he knows them all by name; he knows all their thoughts, all their wants, all their ways, all their conditions. Now, I say, this is a great happiness, that we have a King that knows us so well.

Oh, poor souls, Christ knows you all, all your wants, all your conditions, all your necessities whatsoever. The Lord Jesus knows all thy sufferings, and therefore saith Paul, in Phil. iv. 19. "My God shall supply all your wants."—Oh, it is a sweet Scripture, "My God shall supply all your needs."—So say I to you, sirs, Your King will supply all your needs: he knows all your needs, he knoweth all your straits, all your fears; aye, and he will supply all your needs; oh, here is the excellency of this King!

Fifthly, Jesus Christ is a King that sits upon his Father's throne; at this very time he sits upon his Father's throne. But, beloved, this is not all; Christ does not only sit there himself, but he hath promised that all men, who overcome, shall sit down with him upon his throne: you have a full text to this purpose in Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit upon my throne."

Mark sirs, Christ promises all his subjects, that

they should sit upon the throne with him. Now, I wonder where there is any King but Christ, who will suffer his subjects to sit upon his throne with him. Alas! this would be treason for a man to desire it. I remember, among other things, I have read of a king, who passing over a water his crown fell from his head into the water, and one of his poor servants, out of love to him, leapt in and fetched it up, and for his more ease put it on his head, that he might get the better out: and for this the poor man had his head cut off. So high, and mighty, and lofty was this prince! aye, but sirs, the Lord Jesus is not so, he is no such proud King: he did not only uncrown himself to crown us, and wear the crown of thorns, that we might wear the crown of glory, but he consents and gives leave to his subjects to sit upon the throne with him: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me upon my throne." Oh, what a glorious King is this! that every one of his poor subjects shall sit upon the throne with him. So in Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." A man would think, sirs, this very thing would draw the whole world after Christ.

Oh! how should this draw the affections of men to be in love with those great proffers, and privileges, and honour that Christ bestoweth upon his poor followers! He doth not only make them kings, but he grants them to sit upon his throne with him; thou wouldst say it were an honour in-

deed, O true believer, couldst thou look into heaven, and see Christ sit upon his throne! But this honour have all his saints; yea, much more, he makes them all kings, and grants to them to sit upon the throne with him.

Sixthly, Jesus Christ is a King that loves all his subjects, and all his subjects love him; and I am sure that this cannot be said of any king under heaven, but it may be said of the Lord Christ, for he is a King that loves all his subjects, and all his subjects love him: and this I shall endeavour to shew by this afternoon's exercise; and the next day I shall handle the other part, That all his subjects love him. There are nine or ten particulars wherein the love of Christ to his subjects doth appear, and is wonderfully manifested.

First, His love to his subjects is a primary love. We love him saith the apostle, because he loved us first, 1 Johu iv. 19. "We love him," and why? "because he first loved us," 1. His love is the cause preceding, our love is the effect following. If he had not fired our hearts with the flames of his love, we should never have bestowed one spark of spiritual love upon Christ: he must draw before we can run; and therefore saith the church, Cant. i. 4. "Draw me, and we will run after thee." Sirs, we cannot run without drawing; he must draw us before we can run, and when he draweth we run. It was not man's loveliness that engaged God to love and save men: God loveth his enemies even in their

sinful state, though not with a love of well-willing to them.

Oh! sirs, since God loved us when we were not like him, we should strive to be like him who thus loved us: nothing can engage a saint to love God so much as this, that God loved him so much. A minister once weeping at the table, and being asked the reason of it, answered, Because I love Christ no more. Indeed, friends, this should grieve us that we love so little, who are so much beloved. You have a famous saying of Augustine, He loves not Christ at all, who loves him not above all: this is the first love wherewith God loves his people: it is a primary love.

Secondly, Christ is a King that loves his subjects with a distinguishing love, and a separating love: the general love of Christ is scattered and branched out to all the creatures in the world: but his special love, his exceeding great and rich love, is only settled upon his church. Now, if you ask me what Christ's distinguishing love is, I shall name it, and but name it to you.

1. It is pardoning love. 2. It is redeeming love. 3. Calling love. 4. Justifying love. 5. Adopting love. 6. Sanctifying love. 7. Glorifying love.

This I say is a particular love: Christ's love is not only sweeter than wine, but better than life: he is most lovely, he is altogether lovely: Christ is nothing but love to those who are his love.

Thirdly, Christ loves his saints with a protecting love, Isa. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget her

sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ?” Can a woman forget her sucking child ? Is it possible a woman should be so inhuman, to forget her tender infant, and not have compassion on the son of her womb ? “ Yes,” saith the Lord, “ they may forget them ; yet I will not forget thee.” God may as soon cease to be God as cease to be good ; he may as soon cease to live as cease to love ; no, no, he cannot forget them ; did he forget Israel in Egypt, or his church in Babylon, or Daniel in the lions’ den ? Did he forget the three children in the furnace, or Jeremiah in the dungeon, or Jonas in the whale’s belly, or Peter in the prison ; did he forget them ? The wicked say indeed, the Lord doth forget, in Ezek. ix. 9. “ The Lord hath forgotten the earth, and he sees it not ; but they are much mistaken.” There are three or four texts of Scripture, which I shall humbly offer to your serious consideration, that do wonderfully speak out God’s protecting love to his people. The first is in Rev. vii. 2, 3. You find there an angel hath power given him to hurt the earth and the sea. Now there comes another angel, and cries out, “ Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees.” Why ? what is the reason ? In the third verse, “ Until we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.” Do not pour out your judgments upon them, until we have secured the servants of God. Oh ! how wonderfully doth the Lord protect his people ! So again, in Ezek. ix. Certain men he set to destroy that wicked people,

and among the rest, the Lord calls, and bids one set a mark on them that sigh for the abominations of the land, and for the rest, saith he, destroy them, old and young.

Oh! sirs, this doth wonderfully set out God's protecting love to his people. So in Isa. iii. 8. the Lord bids the prophet tell them what sad judgments should come upon them, upon the kings, and princes, and great men, and soldiers. Now, saith the Lord, say to the righteous, it shall be well with them, none of this shall come near them. Oh! how wonderfully doth this magnify God's protecting love. Isa. xxvi. 20. "Come my people, enter into your chambers, shut the door, and hide yourselves for a little moment." Why so, O Lord? Why, until the indignation be overpast. Come, saith God, I am resolved to execute my judgments on wicked men; therefore hide yourselves for a moment. And therefore, I say, let no man's heart fail him, it is but for a moment, and then thy miseries shall end. Beloved, when our miseries are at the greatest, his help is at the nearest. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When Mordecai is thoroughly humbled, the rude Haman shall be hanged. But then,

Fourthly, Christ loves his people with a most cordial love; he loves them with all his heart: nay, they are the dearly beloved of his soul, as himself calls them, Jer. xii. 7. "I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies." Christ's love to his people is

not a lip-love, from the teeth outwardly; but a real love from the heart inwardly. Christ loves his people as his Father loves him; and how is that, can you tell? No, all the men on earth, nor angels in heaven, cannot declare the love that the Father bears to Christ; and yet as God loves Christ, so doth Christ love his people. You have a full text for this, they are Christ's own words: "As the Father loveth me, so love I you." Oh, sirs, how infinitely doth the Father love the Son, and how infinitely doth the Son love his people! Why, he loves them as the father loves him. Oh, Lord, what love is this! that the Saviour should love the sinner: that Christ should love the miserable sinner: and thus it is. Oh! sirs, believers are like letters of gold engraven on the very heart of Christ. Oh the breadth, the height, the length of the love of Christ, saith the apostle, it passeth knowledge. As if so be he wanted words to set it forth, Eph. iii. 29. "The love of Christ which passeth knowledge."—As if so be there were both want of words, and want in words, to set forth the love of Christ; but certainly it must be very great; for as the Father loves him, so he loves them. Alas! others love the saints, but how do they love them? Why, not with a cordial love; they do not love them for their good, but for their goods; it is more for the money in their purses, than for the grace in their hearts: they love the saints as the Samaritans did the Jews; just as men do with their sun-dials, never look on them but when the sun

shines: why so? The world never looks upon the saints but in the time of prosperity. When the Jews flourished and were in their glory, oh what great friends were the Samaritans to them! But when the poor Jews were under affliction, then they had no worse enemies than they. Why, but Christ is not so, he loves thee when thou art poor, as well as when thou art rich; as well when thou art in thy rags, as when thou art in thy robes; when thou art in adversity, as well as when thou art in prosperity. Christ loves his saints as well upon a gallows, as though it were in a palace; for whom he loves, he loves unto the end. Heb. xiii. 5. He is faithful, who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" never leave thee in any condition, or any place. Oh, sirs, what a love is this! And therefore, a rush for what the world can do, or for the world's love; it is like a Venice glass, soon broken; it smiles now, and quickly frowns, it cries Hosanna to-day, and to-morrow Crucify him; but Christ's love is from the very heart.

Fifthly, Jesus Christ loves his subjects with a love of benevolence, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and, saith Paul, "He loved me and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20.—The Father gives the Son and the Son gives himself, who loved me, and gave himself for me: all that Christ did and suffered, it is for me: all that Christ hath is mine. Oh! soul, Christ's love is

thine to pity thee ; Christ's mercy is thine to save thee ; Christ's graces are thine to beautify thee ; and his glory is thine to crown thee : Christ's power is thine to protect thee ; thou seest, he that is sure of God's love to him, is sure of God's power for him ; and Christ's wisdom is thine to counsel thee : and his angels are thine to guard thee : and his Spirit is thine to comfort thee : and his word is thine to teach thee. There are four attributes of God which are of great support to Christians.

1. His faithfulness. 2. His mightiness. 3. His goodness. And, 4. his wisdom.

And therefore, sirs, it is your duty to live upon promises, while providences seem to run cross : Christ's love to you is free love. All that he hath given you is free : his grace is free, his love is free, his salvation is free, and himself is free. And a dram of grace in the heart, is better than a chain of gold about the neck. Now, beloved, all that Christ hath bestowed upon you, it is free, and therefore it is a love of benevolence.

Sixthly, Christ loves his subjects with a love of compassion, sympathising with them in all their sorrows and sufferings : truly this is a great comfort indeed : " In all their afflictions," saith the text, " he was afflicted," Isa. lxii. 7. So saith the apostle, Heb. iv. 15. " We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;" that is, we have an high priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; one that doth weep in our tears, and sigh in our sighs,

and sorrow in our sorrows, and suffer in our sufferings: and therefore, saith Christ, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Oh, what a sweet love is this! a love of compassion, and sympathising with us in all our sorrows and sufferings; Christ was first persecuted by Paul in his members, and afterward he was persecuted in Paul as one of his members.

Now, beloved, Jesus Christ loves his subjects with a love of compassion, and therefore let thy sufferings be what they will, Jesus Christ doth only as it were bear a share with thee.

Seventhly, Jesus Christ loves his people with a love of delight and complacency, Prov. viii. 17. "I love them that love me."—"The KING shall greatly delight in thy beauty," Psal. xl. 11. speaking there of Christ; the King shall greatly delight in thy beauty, with great delight and complacency. And therefore, beloved, Christ calls his church his love, his dove, his beloved, his fair one. Oh, how infinitely doth Christ love his church! Certainly Christ bears a great love to his church; and hence it is you read, "Christ walketh among the golden candlesticks, and he feedeth among the lilies, and his delight is with the sons of men."—Although poor believers be ravens in the world's eye, yet they are doves in Christ's eye; they are very precious in his esteem: though they be the loathing of wicked men's souls, yet they are dearly beloved of God's soul, he delights in them. The king shall greatly delight in them.

Eighthly, Christ loves his people with an everlasting love, and an undying love : it is a love that never dies, never waxeth cold : Christ's love is like a fountain ever flowing, and never dried up ; whom he loves from eternity, these he loves to eternity, and they are believers. Now, sirs, is not this a great favour to be beloved ? In John xiii. 1. " He loves them even to the end," not a day, a month, or a year, not for a flash and away ; but even unto the end. And in Jer. xxxi. 3. speaking there of his love, it is called an everlasting love : " I have loved thee," saith God, " with an everlasting love."

Oh, sirs, this is a love that shall bed and board with thee, that shall lie down and rise up with thee, that shall go to thy death-bed with thee, to the grave with thee, and to heaven with thee. The saints shall put off the jewel of faith when they die, but not the jewel of love ; for that shall remain with them to eternity. God loves his saints with an everlasting love.

Ninthly, With an universal love : his love is universal to all his saints. Oh there is not one saint but Christ infinitely loves ! he loved poor Lazarus as well as rich Abraham, and despised Job as well as honourable David. He loves the poorest saints as well as the richest, he loves them all alike : God is no respecter of persons. Oh, where is there such a king now as Christ ! They love their nobles, they are their favourites ; but Christ loves all his subjects. Christ's love extends to all his saints ; his

love is like the beams of the sun, which reacheth always, east, west, north, and south: so doth Christ's love.

Tenthly, His love is a correcting love. "Whom he loveth he chasteneth. He correcteth every son whom he receiveth."

Eleventhly, Christ's love is a directing love; he hath promised to guide and direct his people in the way wherein they ought to walk. Oh, put all these particulars together, and sure you must needs confess that Jesus Christ loves his subjects infinitely: as it was said of Lazarus, when Christ wept for him, they made this construction of it, Oh how he loves him! Oh, sirs, how doth Christ love you who are his people! He loves you infinitely, even beyond measure.

Now, oh sirs, for the Lord's sake, consider of it, and let this draw forth your love to him.

I shall, the next opportunity, come to shew you the love of Christ's subjects to him; if the Lord give leave.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

THE Spouse indeed was sick of love, but Christ exceeded her; for he died for love. "Whilst we were sinners, Christ died for us, saith the apostle. He loved us more than his own life; yea, the very life of Christ to him was not too dear for us. Some write of a fowl called a pelican, and they say, that she feeds her young ones with her own blood. Oh! sirs, Christ is our pelican, that hath nourished and fed us with his own blood. "My flesh is meat

indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," saith Christ, John vi. 55. Christ's red blood hath taken away our red guilt; scarlet-red sinners are by grace become milk-white saints; all our precious mercies coming in swimming to us in precious blood.

Christ bled love at every vein, his drops of blood were drops of love; yea, the more bloody, the more lovely: he was most lovely upon the cross, because then he shewed most love to us.

The last day I shewed you the great love which Jesus Christ bears to all his subjects; and the sum of my discourse was this, That Jesus Christ loves his subjects with an everlasting and undenyng love. That which I am now to shew to you is this, That all Christ's subjects love him; and what kind of love it is.

The saints' love to Christ is vehement and strong: this will appear, if you consider to what the Scripture likens and compares the saints' love. Now it is compared to four things.

1. To sickness. 2. To death. 3. To the grave. 4. To fire. To these things is a believer's love compared in Scripture: I shall handle them in order.

First, Sickness. This is the first comparison which doth set forth the strength of the believer's love; this is set down in two places of this book of Canticles, chap. ii. 5. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." And in chap. v. 8. "Tell ye him whom my soul loveth, that I am sick of love."—She is overwhelmed, she is overcome, and even ravished with his love and

beauty. Oh! I thirst, I faint, I pant, I long for him. O! sirs, the church is very sick, and ready to swoon; never was Ahab so sick for a vineyard, never was Sisera so desirous for milk, nor Samson for water, nor Rachel for a child, nor Amnon for his sister Tamar, as poor broken-hearted sinners are for Christ: when Christ gets into the heart, he draws all the affections to him. I remember the speech of a gracious woman, I have borne, said she, nine children, with as much pain as other women, and yet I could with all my heart bear them over again; yea, bear them, and bear them all the days of my life, that I might be sure of a part in Christ. Oh how infinitely do believers love Christ! David wonders at his own love, Psalm cxix. 97. "O how love I thy law!" He makes a wonder at it here; with what vehemency he loves God's word. "O how love I thy law! so the spouse here, she does not only love him, but she is sick of love, ready to die for love. Oh! sirs, here is a sickness not unto death, but unto life; it is a sickness that still bringeth blessedness and happiness with it, a sickness that shall be cured by him who is the great Physician of souls. This is the first; she compares her love to sickness.

Secondly, The next thing whereby she expresseth the strength of her love to Christ, it is by death: 'This you have in Cant. viii. 6. She there tells you, "her love is strong as death."—Beloved, you know death is strong, it is the king of terrors, and the terror of kings: it subdues all sorts of people, high

and low, rich and poor, old and young, good and bad, the greatest monarchs, kings, and emperors, have been thrown down by death ; where did ever that man dwell that was too strong for death ? If strength could have resisted it, then Samson had missed it. Could greatness have overlooked it, Nebuchadnezzar had escaped it : could beauty have outfaced it, then Absalom had never met it : could riches have bribed it, Dives had avoided it. But, alas ! none of these gallants were hardy enough for death, it trode on the necks of them all : and therefore, oh look upon death also, as a thing you must meet with ! look upon yourselves as a thing you must part with. Now, by this you may guess what love is, It is strong as death : aye, strong indeed. Oh, how strong is death ! Nay, believers' love to Christ is not strong as death, but stronger than death ; as some Scriptures make it appear.—A believer's love to Christ is stronger than death, " I am persuaded," saith Paul, " neither life, nor death, principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39.—Death, though it may kill us, it cannot hurt us ; though death may send us to the pit of darkness, yet it cannot send us to the place of torments : though it may take away our lives, yet it cannot take away our loves : bloody tyrants have taken away the martyrs' lives for Christ, but they could never destroy their love to him. One of the primitive Christians, when he



JOHN IV. 7.



CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

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came to suffer, said, ‘ Oh, I shall die for my Saviour but once, and no more lives to lay down ! Oh, I could die an hundred times for him !’ Oh ! sirs, love is a thing that outlives all enemies, all persecutions, all dangers : nay, death itself.—In Rev. xii. 11. saith the text, “ They loved not their lives unto the death.” And so saith Job, “ Though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee ;” as if he had said, oh, Lord, though thou take away my posterity, my greatness, my health, my goodness, my children ; yea, my life itself, thou shalt never take away my love : though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee. Job. xiii. 15.—So that love is not only as strong as death, but stronger than death : for love is the conquerer at the last.

Thirdly, Another thing whereby she expresseth the strength of her love, and her strong affection to Christ, it is the grave ; and this you have in chapter viii. 6. Her “ love is cruel as the grave.” The grave is the bed of darkness, which is always craving, and never satisfied, but devours all that comes. Christ tells us in John iv. 14. “ He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall thirst no more.”—What, thirst no more ? No more after the world, and worldly things ; but more and more after Christ and heaven. He that drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall thirst no more. No more after those low poor things, but more and more after Christ.

No hungry man did ever with more appetite long for bread, nor a thirsty man long for water,

nor a naked man for clothes, nor a covetous man for riches, nor a sick man for health, nor a condemned man for pardon, than souls that are truly gracious do for Christ Jesus. "My soul thirsteth for thee," saith David, in Psal lxiii. 1. "My soul thirsteth for thee." Why, David, how doth your soul thirst for God? Why, he tells you, in Psalm xlii. 1. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."—Now mark, sirs, the poor hart which is hunted by dogs; his nature is, as it were, all over in a flame, in a burning heat, and then it pants, and thirsts, and is ready to die for water. Now, says David, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."—Oh, the vehement fire of David's thirst! and therefore he tells you elsewhere, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none I desire on earth in comparison of thee," Psalm lxxiii. 23. Do you not desire your wives, your children, your crown, your kingdom? yea, these he desired in their places, but these were nothing in comparison of God. I remember the saying of a martyr, to one that asked him if he did not love his wife and children, when they wept by him? Love them! yes, saith he, if all the world were gold, and mine to dispose of, I would give it all to live with them, though it were in a prison; yet saith he, in comparison of him, I love them not.

Oh! sirs, we must tread upon father, and run over mother to come to Christ. You know Peter, to come to Christ would go upon the bare water;

rather than sail, he went upon the sea to Christ; truly it was a dangerous passage, but Peter bore up excellently well, while his faith bore up, but when his faith sank then Peter began to sink too. The world is called a sea, in Daniel, and in the Revelation; and we must go upon these waters to Christ, and be sure to keep up faith, and then you will hold out; but if faith fail, you shall be sure to sink. Oh! sirs, the believer's love is unsatisfied like the grave; None but Christ, none but Christ, saith the martyr; and as Augustine saith, Oh Lord, take away all, only give me thyself!

Fourthly, Love is compared to fire, and it hath a most vehement flame, in Cant. viii. 9.—Now, beloved, the saints' love to Christ, is not only compared to fire for its warming and heating, but for its kindling, and encreasing, and flaming: "Whilst I was musing," saith David, "the fire burned," Psalm xxxix. 3. What fire? Why, the fire in his heart, and not the fire on the hearth. And when the apostles went to preach the gospel, the fire sat upon their tongues, in Acts ii. 3.

Now, beloved, as the saints' love is compared to fire in the Scripture, so you shall find afflictions, and persecutions, and dangers, and these cruel things that accompany the poor saints in the world, are called waters and floods, in Dan. ix. and Psalm lxi. and Matth. vii. But two Scriptures there are more than ordinary: in Rev. xvii. 15. where they are called waters, "The waters which thou sawest,

where the whore sat, they be peoples and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The Spirit opens it to our hand: and you have another full Scripture, in Rev. xii. 14. where it is there said of the dragon, that he cast out much water like a flood after the woman. Now, what is the flood here? Why, this flood is bloody persecutions, and devilish persecutions. Now, beloved, how long hath the dragon been spewing out her water upon the church? And wherefore is all this water thrown out? It is to quench the fire that I speak of; but can they do it? No, alas! they may spew till their eyes come out of their head, and to no purpose, Cant. viii. 7. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." All the bloody persecutions and afflictions cannot quench love: and therefore let wicked men send forth as many floods as they will, it cannot drown the saints' love. All the water that Saul and his party threw after David did not quench his. No, saith he, "Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill, Ps. xxiii. 4. David is not afraid to go by death's door. All the waters that Herod and the rulers threw upon the apostles, could never quench their love.

Now, beloved, you will find after the apostles where whipt soundly, they went away rejoicing, and rejoicing in this very thing, that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ.--And Heb. x. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods."—And saith Paul, in Rom. viii. 35. "Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, and the like?" Believe it, sirs, all these are trying things, and yet, saith he, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" No, no, they cannot do it, there is nothing shall ever be able to separate us from the love of Christ; so that the believer's love is not made of such metal to be quenched by this flood; the saints are all on fire for Christ. And so we find that great flood which Nero and Julian poured out upon the primitive Christians; what, did it quench the fire? I remember one of them said, Had I ten heads they should all suffer for Christ. And another said, If every hair of my head were a man, they should all suffer for Christ.—Alas! the poor Christians caught their torments like so many crowns: and the Scripture tells you, that "many waters cannot quench love."

Now, beloved, put these four things together, and it is very clear, that the saints' love to Christ is vehement and strong; they will hang for him, they will burn for him, do any thing for him, suffer the greatest torments rather than he should lose the least dram of glory. But you will say, Why do all God's subjects love with this love?

The reasons are two, *First*, Because he deserves it; *Secondly*, He commands it.

First, Christ deserves our love: why do we love him?—Why he deserves it at our hands, were it ten thousand times more than it is. Beloved, it was he that created us; it is he that sanctified us; it

is he that redeemed us, and loved us ; it was he that changed our natures, and pardons our sin ; it was he that made our peace, and pacified his Father's wrath for us, and satisfied his Father's justice for us, and wrought everlasting righteousness for us : it is he that bore our cross, that we might wear his crown. He waded through a sea of sufferings for us, to bring pardon to our souls ; and doth not this Christ deserve our love ? Oh infinitely, infinitely ! And truly, sirs, the more Christ hath done and suffered for us, the dearer shall he be unto us.

Secondly, As Christ deserves our love, so he commands it : Christ commands us to love him above life, above wife, above relations. Christ will have all, or none at all. Jesus Christ must weigh heavier than all relations in the balance of our affections : he commanded to love him above all.

Application. I now proceed to the application of all to ourselves, which is the third thing in order to be handled, and I shall make three uses of it. *1st*, For Consolation. *2ndly*, Examination. *3rdly*, Exhortation.

First of all, Is it so that Christ loves us with an everlasting and never-dying love ?—Why, then, here is comfort for you who are his people. I speak only now to such. “ Comfort ye, comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,” saith God, Isa. xl. 1 ; and saith Christ, John xiv. 1. “ Let not your hearts be troubled.” Christ would not have his poor saints troubled ; and saith the apostle, “ Rejoice evermore.” 1 Thess. v. 17. “ Rejoice evermore !”—Alas ! how can we rejoice

when men vilify us, when men reproach us, and abuse us, and persecute us, how can we rejoice? but do but hark what Christ saith, Matth. v. 11. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake." Mark, Blessedness goeth in the first place, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you."

Oh sirs, it is a matter of blessedness, and therefore be not cast down. You know what was said of old, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. last verse. Oh poor soul! this is all the hell that thou shalt have, therefore be of good cheer; here thou hast thy bad things, thy good things are to come; here thou hast thy bitter things, but thy sweet things are to come; here thou hast thy prison, but thy palace is to come; here thou hast thy rags, thy robes are to come; here thou hast thy sorrow, thy joy is to come; here thou hast thy hell, thy heaven is to come; after the cup of affliction, comes the cup of salvation; the sweetness of the crown which shall be enjoyed, will make amends for the bitterness of the cross which was endured.

One passing by a place where a cross lay on the ground, he caused it to be reared up, and found much riches and treasure under it. Oh, sirs, under the greatest troubles lie your greatest treasures, patience for sorrow: the seed of sorrow on earth, shall reap a golden crop of joy in heaven; they that sow holiness in the seed-time of their lives, shall

reap happiness in the harvest of eternity. Oh ! sirs, never think to have an end of your sorrow, till there be an end of your sin.—The apostle tells us, “Our light affliction, which is for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” A dram of reproach to a weight of glory ! Oh what a short moment of pain to an eternity of pleasures ! and therefore saints, be of good cheer, here is comfort for you : your best days are to come, you are subjects who are beloved entirely, cordially, infinitely, with an undenyng love.

Use 2. For the use of examination. Is it so that the saints’ love to Christ is vehement and strong ? Why then, I besech you examine, and try, and search yourselves, how do your pulses beat after Christ ? Oh that you would examine yourselves, that you may know whose you are while you live, and whither you shall go when you die, and what will become of you to eternity. Oh sirs ! are you sick of love ? Do you love Christ ? Are you sick of love to Christ ? For the Lord’s sake, sirs, examine and try, and see whether you be sick of love to Christ. It is to be feared, there be but few in the world sick of this disease. Many are sick for honours, that are but rattles to still men’s ambitions ; many are sick for gold and silver, which is but a little shining dirt ; many men are sick for blood, who eat up the Lord’s people like bread ; God will lay on them the hand of vengeance, who lay on his saints the hand of violence ; many are sick with superstition, and the human traditions of men ;

which, instead of bringing their souls to heaven, will beguile them of heaven! alas! many are sick of their sufferings: Who need to fear the cross, who are sure of the crown? but oh! how few are there that are sick of love to Christ! how many are there in this congregation that are sick of love to Christ? for the Lord's sake, do not deceive yourselves, you see the spouse was ready to swoon, and faint, and die for Christ.

Secondly, Her love was as strong as death; nay, stronger than death: is your love so? Oh soul! can thou endure a prison for Christ, burning for Christ, hanging for Christ, forsaking all for Christ; wilt thou venture on the waves for Christ as Peter did? Oh, sirs, for the Lord's sake, look to yourselves: there are many profess love to Christ in words, but more that deny him in their works: God was never more in men's mouths, and never less in men's lives. Beloved, is your love like the grave, never satisfied? Dost thou cry out more for Christ? Oh, give me Christ, and take the world who will. Is this flame in your souls? For the Lord's sake try yourselves, deal cordially with your poor souls.

Now, beloved, I have given you a taste of true sincere love, and blessed are they who cast their love into the sweet bosom of their Maker.

Use 3. I shall now close all with a word of exhortation.—Well, sirs, if I should preach here till the morrow-morning, what can I say more to make you to love Christ? He is most lovely, “he is altogether lovely.” Therefore, love Christ, love Christ, all

causes of love are in him ; there may be particular causes of love in men and angels ; but I say all causes of love are in Christ : O, sirs, love Christ : for if you do not, there is a dreadful curse pronounced against you ; there is no heaven, no happiness, no crown, without Christ ; for in him doth all fulness dwell ; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, and the Father gives forth all his loving kindness through Christ. Beloved, is it not better swimming in the water-works of repentance, than burning in the fire-works of vengeance ; one of them you must ; there is no coming to the fair haven of glory, without sailing through the narrow strait of repentance ; and there, say what you will, unless you believe in your Saviour, your souls will be miserable for ever ; and therefore consider of what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Love Christ more than ever, more than all, and above all, and then you shall be happy for evermore.

Christ is a KING, PRIEST, and PROPHET ; a King for government and rule : a Priest for sacrifice and intercession ; a Prophet for preaching and revealing the secrets of his Father's bosom.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

BELoved, you know how far we proceeded last Lord's day : I finished the sixth particular, wherein Jesus Christ the King of kings, doth surmount and excel all other kings : and it was thus, Jesus

Christ loves all his subjects, and all his subjects love him: and I shewed you the wonderful love of Christ to his subjects, and his subjects' love to him in many particulars. I now proceed to other particulars, wherein Christ excels the kings of the earth.

Seventhly, Jesus Christ makes all his subjects, his subjects do not make him. By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, Col. i. 19. By him; by whom? by Jesus Christ: by Christ were all things created. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not, John i. 10.—So in the 3rd verse, “All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made.” There was not any thing made without Christ, and all things were made by Christ. Beloved, Jesus Christ he creates his subjects; he makes his subjects; and gives being to his subjects; in him we live, move, and have our being: he gives us a threefold being; our first being in the state of nature, our second being in the state of grace, and our third being in the state of glory. This is the seventh thing wherein Jesus Christ excels all other kings; he makes his subjects, which none else can do.

Eighthly, Christ is the richest of all kings. O! sirs, he is rich in love, he is rich in knowledge, rich in goodness, rich in wisdom, rich in grace, rich in glory. He is as rich as the Father himself: the riches of the Deity are in him, in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. Mark,

sirs, in him there dwells all fulness. Of what? Why of the Godhead; and not only so, but he dwells in him bodily. Alas! sirs, what are princes' single crowns, or the pope's triple crown, to Christ's many crowns? Christ hath not one, or two, or three crowns, but many crowns upon his head, Rev. xix. 12. "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns." Christ is richer than any king, nay, richer than all the kings in the world, "for he is heir of all things," in Heb. i. 8. He is the greatest heir in heaven and earth.

The Spanish ambassador coming to see the treasure of St. Mark at Venice, which was so much cried up through the world for a famous treasury, he fell a groping of it, to find whether it had any bottom; and being asked the reason of it, said he, "My great master's treasury differs from yours in this, his hath no bottom as yours hath;" alluding to the mines of the Indies. But alas! what is the proud Spaniard's treasure to Christ's treasure, and what are his mines to Christ's mines? What are all the jewels, and diamonds, and crowns, and the sceptres of all the kings of the earth to Christ's? The whole Turkish empire, saith Luther, is but a crust that God throws to dogs, which is a great part of the world indeed: but it is no more than a bone, a crust that God throws to dogs. O! sirs, Christ's riches are so many, they cannot be numbered; they are so precious, they cannot be valued; so great, they cannot be measured. O the infinite

riches of our King ; Christ is a mine of gold, which we must dig till we find heaven.

Ninthly, Christ excels all other kings in this too ; he is a king whose power is absolute over all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues. Now, sirs, his will is a law : no man's will in the world is sufficient to be a law, but the will of our King is sufficient.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is a King who rules over the souls and consciences of men, over the wills and hearts of men ; other kings may rule over the estates of men, over the bodies of men, but not over their consciences. Now this is Christ's glory, which he will give to no other : Christ by his power is able to subdue the wills of men, and the hearts of men, though never so stubborn and stout before. All the power of the world cannot do this : if all the kings, and princes, and emperors, of the world were put together, they were not able to subdue the heart of one poor man ; they may beat his body, afflict his body, torment his body, but as for his heart, I say, all the kings and potentates in the world, nay, all the angels in heaven, cannot subdue the heart of a poor sinner : and this is the glory of Christ, than he can do this. Heart-work is God's work. The great heart-maker must be the great heart-breaker, none can do it but he.

Eleventhly, Christ is a King that hath no need of any instruments ; he makes use of them sometimes,

but he needs not any : alas ! sirs, what can the kings of the earth do without instruments ? How can they govern their kingdoms without instruments ? They must have this instrument here, and the other there, or else farewell crown and kingdom quickly. But Jesus Christ hath no need of any, he can do any thing by his own power. By himself he destroyed Pharaoh and his great host in the Red sea, *Exod. xiv.* By himself he overthrew Jericho, that great city, *Josh. vi.* By himself he smote the great army of a thousand thousand men ; the greatest army that ever we read of, *2 Chron. xiv.* By himself he overthrew Ammon and Moab, and Mount Seir, who warred against Judah.—This now he did by himself.

Secondly, See what he hath done by weak means . he smote the kings about Sodom, even by Abraham and his poor family, *Gen. xxiii.* By weak means he overthrew that mighty army of the Midianites, by Gideon's 300, *Judg. vii.* By weak means he destroyed great Goliath, even by David, and great Sisera by a woman. By weak means he destroyed a garrison of the Philistines, even by Jonathan and his armour-bearer, *1 Sam. xiv. 4.* Now this he did by weak means. And much more :

Now, Thirdly, See what he did contrary to means : why, contrary to means he delivered the three children from burning, being in the fire, *Dan. iii.* Contrary to means, he delivered Jonas from drowning in the sea.

I. SAMUEL. XVII. 31.



DAVID WITH THE HEAD OF GOLIATH.

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Contrary to means, he delivered Daniel from devouring, being in a den of lions.

Contrary to means, he kept the Israelites from being drowned, being in the sea.

I say this he did contrary to means.

And I might shew you what he hath done by contrary means, but I pass that. So that you see our King hath no need of instruments, and therefore he wonderfully excells all others.

Twelfthly, Christ is a King who will overcome and subdue all our enemies; yea, all our enemies, both spiritual and temporal, he will utterly overthrow.

Our enemies are very many, and very mighty: high in power, and high in pride, and we very weak; we may well speak in David's words, in 2 Sam. iii. 29. Saith he, "I am weak this day, though anointed king." How David! weak to-day, and yet made a king to-day? Yes, saith he, the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me. Why, believers, you are all kings in a spiritual sense, you are kings, elected kings in a disguise; but yet, poor hearts, you are weak, though you are kings elected: the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for you.

Why, but sirs, Jesus Christ is a King of kings, a King above all kings, and over all kings, and he must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet, 1 Cor. xv. 25. Mark, "HE must reign," he must of necessity, God hath spoken it, till he has put all enemies under his feet, not only some, but all.

O! this is good news to saints, excellent news; what king can do this but Christ? What king can put all his enemies under his feet? What earthly king can subdue all his enemies? Alas! they cannot subdue their own; for the most flourishing kings that we read of, have fallen before their enemies for want of strength; Richard III. cried out in his distress, ‘A kingdom for a horse, a kingdom for a horse!’ and yet all this could not save his life.

Alas, alas! the most flourishing kings have been so far from subduing their subjects’ enemies, that they cannot subdue their own; but Jesus Christ can subdue all his enemies: he hath all power in heaven and in earth given to him, in Matth. xxviii. 18. So that if he speaks the word, all his enemies are overthrown, even in a moment.

In the *Thirteenth* place, Christ surmounts all other kings in this; he is a King that gives his subjects the richest and the best gifts of any other king whatsoever; in John x 27. 28. “My sheep,” saith he, “hear my voice, and they know me, and they follow me, and I give to them eternal life.”—The wise God, that he may invite and encourage poor sinners to a holiness of life, sets before their eyes the recompence of reward: that if the equity of his precepts do not prevail, the excellency of his promises may: he would fain catch men with a golden bait.

Abraham’s servant gave jewels of silver, and

jewels of gold to Rebekah, that he might win her heart over to Isaac, in Gen. xxiv. 23. Oh! the jewels, the excellent jewels that Christ gives to poor souls to win their heart to him: Christ gives us richly all things to enjoy; what can we desire more? 1 Tim. vi.

Alas! the men of the earth give but poorly and penuriously, but Christ gives richly, Christ gives freely; no man in the world gives so freely as Christ: Christ gives frequently, every day, every hour he scattereth jewels to poor souls. The great king of Persia gave two of his courtiers, to the one a golden cup, to the other a kiss, and he that had the cup complained to the king, that his fellow's kiss was better than his golden cup. Oh! sirs, Christ doth not put off with a cup of gold, but he gives us the kiss; he gives best gifts to his beloved ones, he gives his best love, his best joy, his best peace, his best mercies. Oh! where is there a king like this King? Alas! earthly kings may give great titles, or a place in the court, and the like: they may give a title to-day, and a halter to-morrow, as in the case of Haman; they may smile to-day, and frown to-morrow; kiss to-day, and kill to-morrow; but Christ doth not so, he gives the best of every thing, the best of his love, his best blood, not the blood of his finger, but the blood of his heart. Oh, sirs, how far doth Christ excel all others in giving his subjects the best gifts! Oh, sirs, what a gift is heaven? what a gift is a pardon of sin?—1

wonder what king can give his people such gifts : and herein the Lord Jesus excels all others.

In the *last* place, Christ makes all his subjects free ; there is not one subject that he hath, but is a free man and woman. There are some things that Christ frees from, and some things that he makes us free of : some things that he frees us from, and what is that ? Why, that which if we were not freed from, would undo us to all eternity.

First, He frees us from the curse, the cursed curse ; if Christ had not freed us from the curse, we had lived cursedly, and died most cursedly, and been damned for ever ; but Jesus Christ hath freed us. In Gal. v. 1. “ Stand fast,” saith St. Paul, “ in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.” And in John iii. 6. “ If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.” Again, he frees us from the guilt of sin ; our pride would damn us, our covetousness would damn us, our unbelief would damn us, had he not freed us from the guilt of sin ; but Christ frees his people from this. Again, he hath freed us from the power of the devil, inso-much that the devil hath nothing to do with us, in Acts xxvi. And he frees us from the flames of hell, from the pit of hell ; Christ hath cut off the intail of hell and damnation. 1 Thess. i. “ He hath freed us from the wrath to come,” that is, Christ hath freed us from the flames of hell.

Again, Christ hath freed us from the slavery, from the bondage, from the yoke, in Gal. v. 1.

“Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage.” We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, in Eph. ii. 19. And Christ tells us himself, in Matth. xi. 30. “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Here we have burden upon burden, and yoke upon yoke; but saith Christ, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Christ hath delivered us from the slavery, we are not under the law, but under grace; these things we are free from, and there are other things that we are made free of, and that in heaven, we are all made free men and women of the New Jerusalem, and we trade there, and have as good right there as any other saints: we are fellow-citizens, free men of heaven, not only of heaven, but of all the promises, and all the privileges that the saints enjoy.

Now, is not this a wonderful mercy that our King hath done for us; he hath freed us from all those miseries which would ruin us for ever, and made us free of all the excellent privileges whatsoever, which poor souls can enjoy. Now, O! how far doth Christ excel all other kings! the rulers of the earth, they may perhaps lay heavy burdens upon the consciences of men, and bodies of men, and estates of men, but Christ lays no such burdens upon us; no, Christ hath made us free, and no people so free,

because Christ hath freed us upon the cross. Christ bought it dear enough ; it cost him his best blood, his noble blood. I might name more particulars, wherein Christ excels all other kings ; but I think these are very sufficient to demonstrate it.

Use 1. I shall close upon this head with a word of application, and so shall finish this second title, **KING** of kings.

First, Is it so that Christ is a threefold King, as I have shewed you ; and is he a King that doth so far surmount all the kings of the earth ? Oh ! then, however the world goes, here is comfort for saints, that he is such a king. Oh ! what a mercy is this ? What a comfort is this to the Lord's people, that Christ is King above all kings, and over all kings, and must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet ? All his enemies must be brought down and made his footstool. Now this should comfort the people of God, and teach them to wait Christ's leisure, and let him alone ; some earthly kings would do great matters, but they want power ; but Christ wants not power ; for all power is given him in heaven and in earth. Now, sirs, did you really believe this, that all power is certainly given to Christ, certainly it would be a cordial to revive you in the worst times, and saddest of trials.—He, who is our Saviour, he who is our Head, our Brother, our Friend, is King of kings. Oh ! sirs, this doctrine of Christ's kingly power, is a very sweet

doctrine to the members of Christ : And, I beseech you, let these considerations which I have laid before you, bear up your spirits.

I have shewed you with an entire love Christ loves his subjects ; he is King of kings, and can do any thing without instruments ; he needs none to help him to do his work ; he can, if he please, enable the most despicable creatures, as flies, and frogs, and caterpillars, and grasshoppers, to do his work ; therefore let these considerations take impression upon your souls. If a man should tell you, your brother or sister, beyond seas, were advanced to great honours, as Joseph, when he heard that his father was alive, “ Go,” saith he, “ tell my father of all my glory and greatness in Egypt, for he will rejoice at it.”

Now I have told you a relation of Christ's kingly power ; and therefore let this quiet your spirits : “ Be still,” saith the Lord, “ and know that I am God,” in Psal. xlv. 10. It is enough for you to know that I am God, and therefore be still, consider what I am.

2d Use. 2dly, By way of exhortation, I have one word to say to the saints, and another to sinners.

First, To saints.—If it be so, that Christ is King of kings, and King above all kings, and over all kings, oh ! then you who are the people of God, you who are near and dear to him, upon whom, and in whom Christ is formed and stamp't ; oh . that you would give all the glory, and praise and

honour, to Christ, and study to advance his fame. He hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, saith the apostle, to shew forth his praise. Oh, sirs, this should be our great endeavour. Oh, that you who pretend friendship and love to Christ, would endeavour in your places to advance Christ.

Secondly, A word or two to such as are none of the subjects of Christ: let me exhort you to believe in Christ, embrace him, receive him, to lay hold upon him, to be one with him, or else you will one day cry out as that king did in distress ‘Oh, a kingdom for a horse, a kingdom for a Christ,’—Oh! thou wouldst give ten thousand worlds, if thou hadst them to give, for a part in Christ. Alas! sinner, what is the reason that Christ is no more in thy esteem? Thou wilt part with Christ rather than part with thy swearing, and drunkenness, and filthiness. Oh this is sad, there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. He is the Desire of all nations, and we can never be happy without him; and therefore, for the Lord’s sake, sirs, as you love your own souls, lay hold on him, that he may be the Saviour of your souls, the joy of your hearts, and your all in all: for the Lord’s sake, sirs, consider of it, you that do yet stand out against Christ. Oh that I could but tempt you to Christ, Oh that I could prevail with you to love Christ, and to have strong desires after him.

Alas! sirs, if you do not believe, and part with all your iniquities, you must part with Christ at

last ; and what a sad parting will that be to part with God, and Christ, and heaven? When thou wilt come to know what thou hast lost by hugging thy darling corruptions ; oh what a sad condition will it be !—And therefore I beseech you, think of it in time, and believe in your Saviour that your souls may be saved in the day of Christ.



THE MIGHTY GOD.

CANT V. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE,—*That JESUS CHRIST is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

I FINISHED the second title which is given to Christ in scripture, KING of KINGS. I now proceed to a third, and that is, MIGHTY GOD.—One of Christ's titles is, THE MIGHTY GOD ; you have it there in Isa. ix. 9. he is also called *The Mighty God*.

Beloved, I have shewed you from the second title that Christ is a King, a King above all kings, and a King over all kings, and the King of kings, and that his laws are most equal, his subjects most happy ; having no other tax laid upon them than love and fear.

But now this title holdeth him forth, not only as a great King, but as a great God, before whom all kings and kingdoms are but as little drops, or as

small dust, Isa. xl. 15. From this title, **THE MIGHTY GOD**, I shall lay down this proposition, 'That **JESUS CHRIST** is true and perfect God. That is the point I shall insist upon.

There are two sorts of people in the world that deny my doctrine, who deny the Deity of Jesus Christ, who say the second Person of the Trinity is not God.

First, The unbelieving Jews: if Christ had come as the Jews dreamed, as a great monarch, treading upon nothing but crowns and sceptres, and the necks of kings, and had all the potentates of the earth to attend his train; I say, had Christ come in this worldly glory, and pomp, and power, then it may be the Jews would have believed on him; may be then he should have been their God; but now, beloved, because Christ came poorly and meanly, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, as the scriptures saith, Phil. ii. 7. He took none of his gallantry, none of his bravery upon him, but made himself of no reputation; and therefore the Jews slighted him, and disowned him. The Turks mock us at this day with our crucified God. Oh, say they, you worship a crucified God! and some of the heathens say, they would not believe in a hanged God—Oh blessed Jesus, thus art thou reproached and despised by the unbelieving world, because thou camest poorly, and died shamefully for our sins.—They who despise the death of the Lamb, shall surely feel the wrath

of the Lamb ; they who turn away their ears from hearing Christ's voice now, Christ will turn away his ears from hearing their cries then.

Secondly, There be others that deny the Deity of Christ : and there are some seditious ones in this nation, who say, that Christ is but a mere man, and that every saint is as much God as Christ : and further they say, that to equal Christ with God is high blasphemy. They that will not own Christ in his first coming, Christ will not own them at his second coming ; they that will not obey the truth of God revealed from heaven unto them, shall suffer the wrath of God revealed from heaven against them.

Oh, ye blasphemers, ye say, the Son is not God, the Father saith he is God : now, who speaks truth, God or you ? let God be true, and every man a liar. That it is so, I shall give you more clear proofs. Express scripture speaks it forth that Jesus Christ is true and perfect God. Tit. ii. 13. saith the apostle there, " looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God." Mark, Christ is here not only called God, but the great God. Oh, saints, he that came from heaven to make us righteous, will also come from heaven to make us glorious,—looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ : not only so, but Christ is also called Mighty God ; nay, not only Mighty God, but again, " God blessed for ever." Christ is God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5.

Not only blessed for ever, but the true God, 1 John iv. 20. Jesus Christ is there called the true God, not only the true God, but a God for ever and ever. Heb. 1. 8. Mark there, unto the Son he said, Thy throne is for ever and ever.

The Father he calls the Son God himself, and therefore well may we. Unto the Son he said, “Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever.”—Thus you see the doctrine fully proved, that Jesus Christ is the true and perfect God. But, beloved, because the Deity of Christ is so much questioned at this day, and this being one of the serious and chiefest points in divinity, therefore I shall give you some considerations, or demonstrations, or arguments, to fortify you against this great error before named. First, That Jesus Christ is true and perfect God. He is for time, co-eternal; for nature, co-essential; for dignity, co-equal with his Father.

First, For time, co-eternal, John xvii. 5. “Oh Father, glorify thou me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”—You see here, sirs, Christ was before the world was, Christ was from everlasting, from the beginning, Prov. viii. 23. speaking concerning Christ, “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was.” And therefore Christ is called the Everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. So in Rev. i. 8. Christ there, speaking of himself, saith, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning, and the ending, which was, and is, and to is come, the Almighty.”

Mark, sirs, Christ is the same before time, in time, and after time ; which was, and is, and is to come. —Now, beloved, none can be eternal but God ; but Christ is eternal, and therefore he is God, and co-eternal with his Father.

Secondly, He is for nature, co-essential : “ I and my Father are one,” saith Christ, John x. 30. “ There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one.” Mark here, they are one, John xiv. 8. When Philip desires to see the Father, “ Shew us the Father, and it is enough ;” saith Christ, in the 9th and 10th verses, “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”—How so ? “ For I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.” So that you know Christ is more than mere man : he is one with the Father. — Oh, sirs, he is Theanthropos, God-man. If you make the Son mere man, you must make the Father so too.

Thirdly, He is for dignity, co-equal with the Father, Phil. ii. 6. “ Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with the Father.” —Christ thought it no diminution of his Father’s glory, to be equal with his Father in glory.—And you shall further find that all the honour which belongs to God, the Father hath commanded us to give it to the Son.—You have a full text, John

23. “ That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ; for he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father.” Therefore

it is clear to every eye that Christ is for dignity, co-equal with the Father; for the Father hath commanded us to give the same honour to Christ which is due to him; so that it is no blasphemy at all, certainly, to equal Christ with God; for in him are the riches of the Deity, and the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him: as you may see Col. ii. 9. This is the first argument. He is for time co-eternal, for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal with the Father.

Secondly, I shall lay down this argument to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ: consider the work of creation: surely he that made heaven and earth, must needs be a God; you will yield to this: so saith the Lord himself, All the gods that have not made heaven and earth, shall perish from the earth, and from under heaven, Jer. x. 11.—But now, beloved, Jesus Christ made the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, and therefore he is God: See a few scriptures for this, John i. 3. “All things were made by him;” mark, this is by Christ, all things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made, Col. i. 16. “By him were all things created in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible; all things were by him, and for him.” So again, John i. 10. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”—Now, beloved, had Christ been less than God, he could not have made heaven and earth, and therefore he is God of glory, the great

God that now sits upon the throne : for he created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein.

Thirdly, That Christ is the true and perfect God, appears, if you consider the works and miracles which he did in the days of his flesh ; here is another unanswerable argument to prove the Godhead of Jesus Christ.—The winds and the seas obey him, the devils came out of the possessed, the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised, the sick were healed. Oh, who could do this but God, as you may see, Matth. xxi. 5. But you may say, the apostles did great miracles, and yet were not gods. Why, it is true they did great miracles ; but in whose name did they do them? Was it in their own names, and by their own power? No, beloved, they themselves confess the contrary, Acts iv. 10. They tell you, it is not in their own power, but in the name and power of Jesus Christ. So in Acts iv. 18. “we do in the name of Christ.” So that, beloved, this is a strong argument to prove the Deity of Christ ; they did great miracles in his name, and by his power his disciples did great miracles. And with this Jesus satisfied the disciples of John, “Go and tell what things ye hear and see, how the lame walk, and the blind receive their sight ; go and tell John.” Now, I say, these great things could be done by none but by a great God ; and therefore Jesus

Christ is not only the Son of man, but the Son of God, even God blessed for ever.

But, *Fourthly*, Consider divine worship is due unto Christ. Now, you know, worship is proper only to God. Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, said the angel, Rev. xiv. 7. Worship only is proper to God alone. Now, beloved, all the acts of worship that belong to God the Father, are given to the Son Jesus Christ; both angels and men are commanded to worship him, as well as we, Heb. i. 6. "Let all the angels of God worship him:" And in Phil. ii. 10. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both of all things in heaven, and on earth." Mark, sirs, things in heaven, as well as things on earth, must worship Christ; and Christ himself saith, John xiv. 1. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Mark, sirs, speaking of those that believe in God, saith he, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."—Now, beloved, we are commanded to pray to Christ, to glorify Christ, to believe in Christ, to honour Christ, and worship Christ; and therefore the saints have prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," as Stephen did. So that you see worship is due to Christ, both from angels and men, and therefore he must needs be God.

Fifthly, There be clear promises of the coming of Christ under the Old Testament. No sooner was man fallen, but Christ was promised, "The seed of

the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." All the prophets foretold of the MESSIAH, (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Daniel, Malachi, and the rest of them,) how falsely he should be accused, how basely he should be used, and this will be enough to condemn the unbelieving Jews, and make them speechless in the great day of accounts. I might give you the sayings of the same prophets, but you may find them yourselves; search the Old Testament, and you shall find them all speak more or less of Jesus Christ. Thus I have clearly proved, by express scripture and undeniable arguments, that Jesus Christ is true and perfect God. I proceed to the use and application of it to ourselves.

Use. The *First* use shall be for information: if it be so that Jesus is true and perfect God, then, though this be a strange truth to some, yet it is a sound truth; though the mystery be deep, yet the divinity is true, that he who made man became man, suffered by man, and for man. "Without controversy," saith the apostle, "great is the mystery of godliness:" What is the mystery? "God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Without controversy, without all doubt, a great mystery, saith the apostle "God manifested in the flesh."

The schoolmen compare the incarnation of Jesus Christ, to a garment made by three sisters, and one of them wears it: so all the three Persons in the Trinity had a hand in the garment of Christ's flesh, but the second person he wore it; he was God ma-

nifested in the flesh: and this is a great mystery. And truly, sirs, it is a great mystery for happiness to become a curse, Gal. iii; for him that made the angels, to become lower than the angels, Heb. ii; for the Creator to become a creature; for him that had the riches of all in himself, to become poor. Oh! this is a great mystery, that he whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, his glory should be wrapt in the rags of flesh; that the great God should take upon him a piece of earth; that he who hangs the earth upon nothing, should hang upon a cross between two thieves, truly a great mystery; that he who rules the stars, should suck the breasts; that he who thunders in the clouds, should be cradled in a manger. Oh! a great mystery, that Abraham's LORD should become Abraham's son; that the God of Abraham should take upon him Abraham's seed; what a mystery is this? he was conceived in the bowels of his mother, that he might be received into the bosom of his Father. "Therefore," saith the apostle, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." God's Son became man's son, that we poor man's sons might become God's sons.

But, *Secondly*, is Jesus Christ true and perfect God? My second inference is this, That Jesus is a precious God: he is honey in the mouth, beauty in the eye, joy in the heart, and music in the ear. "Let all their money perish with them, who esteem

all the gold in the world worth one day's society with Jesus Christ," said a great Marquis, when he was tempted with money.

Oh! sirs, Christ's members are the happiest, Christ's comforts are the sweetest, Christ's reward is the highest, Christ's precepts are the purest, Christ's glory is the greatest, Christ's love is the truest, Christ's riches are the most precious; he is the glory of God, the paradise of angels, the beauty of heaven, the Redeemer of men. In Heb. i. 3. he is there called "the brightness of his Father's glory," he is the rich jewel in the cabinet of glory, he is the sparkling pearl; whosoever hath him cannot be poor, but whosoever wants him cannot be rich.

Thirdly, If Christ be a true and perfect God, then Christ's members are the greatest and happiest; if Christ is God Almighty's only Son, believers are God Almighty's only daughters. You read of God's daughters in Psal. xlv. Christ is the King, believers are the queen; Christ is the Bridegroom, believers are the bride; Christ is the Lamb, believers are his wife, Rev. xxi. 9. What shall I say? The angels in glory are in a very glorious state, and, let me tell you, believers in Christ are higher than angels; they are servants, we are members; they be the friends of the Bridegroom, we are the bride; they have their personal glory, we have the same glory, for substance, with Jesus Christ, John xvii. 22. "The glory which thou hast given me,"

saith Christ, "I have given them." Believers be nearer the throne than angels; and this doth wonderfully speak out that we are higher than the angels. In Rev. v. the four beasts are nearer the throne than the angels.

Oh! beloved, how are believers advanced! how high are we become, poor dust and ashes, to be above angels! and this is the greatest happiness, which we get by Christ's assuming our nature for the salvation of our souls.

Again, Christ's members be not only the greatest, but the happiest: our renewed condition is as good in Christ as it was bad in Adam. Oh, sirs, we were no more cursed out of Christ, than we were blessed in Christ; Christ is as full of life, as Adam was full of death; Christ is as full of sweetness to us, as Adam was of bitterness to us. Truly, soul, if thou say Christ is thine; I will speak next, and say, Soul, thou hast that which is more worth than a king's ransom; that which is more worth than all that which the devil promised Christ, when he shewed him all the kingdoms of the world. Oh! the happiness of poor believers! there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, saith Paul, Rom. viii. 1. Therefore they are happy.

But, *Fourthly*, Christ Jesus is true and perfect God. Then we infer from hence, that God's love and good-will to mankind was very great, that Jesus Christ should come from heaven to take our nature, that we might be partakers of the divine

nature. Christ took upon him our shame, that we might be partakers of his glory. One drop of his blood is worth a sea of ours, and yet he died our death, that we might live his life; he suffered our hell, that we might enjoy his heaven. Oh! how infinitely did he love us! He endured the sorest pains, that we might enjoy the sweetest pleasures. The scriptures tell us that he came leaping, he came with such a good-will, he came leaping; as you know when a man goes leaping, you may know that it was with a good-will: he came leaping and skipping, Cant. ii. 8. he came "leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." Leaping, saith Gregory, how so? Why, saith he, from the throne to the womb, from the womb to the cradle, from the cradle to the cross, and from thence to the throne again; this was his leap. Oh! sirs, oh! sirs, how much did Jesus suffer for poor believers! he was hanged upon the cross on mount Calvary, that he might sit on the throne in mount Zion.

3rd Use.—Secondly, By way of exhortation; 1st, To sinners, to unbelievers, to graceless persons, have a few words to say. Oh! sirs, oh! sirs, methinks I cannot but do towards you, as Christ did once toward Jerusalem, when he came near the city he wept over it.—Truly, sinner, your state is a weeping state; your state is a miserable state; you lie open to all the wrath, all the vengeance, all the curses under heaven. Oh poor miserable sinners, cannot you pity yourselves? The Lord of heaven

pity you. Did Jesus Christ come from heaven to you sinners, and will not you come out of your sin to come to Christ? Did Christ come from his Father's bosom, and leave his throne and crown, and all his glory, to come to a poor lost world, and to die and suffer here for poor lost sinners: and what, sinners, will this make no impression upon you? Let me tell you, sirs, Christ came into the world, for no other end and reason, but only to die for poor sinners. It was the great design of Christ to save poor sinners. Sirs, if you will not credit me, look into the scripture, and then surely you will believe it, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying," saith the apostle, "and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Mark sirs, he came into the world to save sinners, Christ hanged upon the cross, and wept upon the cross, and died upon the cross, to save sinners; it was for poor sinners all the hardships, all the wants, all the trials and sufferings which he met with; it was for the sake of poor sinners. Christ hath suffered all this woe and misery for thee; and wilt not thou leave thy swearing, and thy drunkenness, and thy wickedness for Christ? Oh! the sad, sad day that is coming on thee! how canst thou answer this before God Almighty, that Jesus Christ, the King of kings, should come into the world, and abase himself so much as to be in a mean state, and yet this should nothing affect you? Oh! who will pity you when you are

dannèd, when you are howling and roaring in hell, that would not pity yourselves ? Oh ! for the Lord's sake, consider that God should come and take our nature, and that he should take our rags, that we might wear his robes ; and what, will you rather remain in your sins and die, than come to Christ for life ? Oh ! sinner, for the Lord's sake, put off your beggar's rags, that you may put on his lovely robes.

I have read of Alexander the Great, that when he came against a city, he used to set up a candle, and if they yielded before the candle was out, they should have quarters, but if they stood out, they might expect nothing but hanging, drawing, and quartering. Oh ! sirs, Christ sets up a candle to thee, and if thou wilt come in to-day, thou shalt have mercy, or else there will be none. If all the angels and saints in heaven should fall upon their knees, and say, Oh ! Lord, spare this poor creature, one dram of mercy for him, it would not be regarded, the Lord will not hear them ; and therefore, for the Lord's sake, consider men are sentenced, not only for their sinfulness, but for their slothfulness ; men may perish for being servants that are unprofitable, as well as for being sinners that are abominable. Methinks you should take as much delight in those precepts that enjoin holiness, as in those promises that assure happiness ; if the day of mercy leave you graceless, the day of judgment will find you speechless : though you may resist the judgment

that he lays before you, yet you can never resist the judgment that he lays upon you : there is no standing before Christ, but by standing in Christ. Ungodly men fear no wrath, because they feel no wrath ; because the sin is unpunished, they think there is no punishment for their sins ; because he goeth on to spare them, they go on to provoke him ; as he adds to their lives, they add to their lusts ; because he is very merciful, they will be very sinful ; because he is very good, they will be very bad ; because justice winks, men think he is blind ; because he doth not reprove them for their sins, therefore they think he doth approve them in their sins. Justice will avenge the quarrel of abused mercy : the longer God forbears, not finding amendment, the sorer he strikes when he comes to judgment.

Oh ! sinners, though the patience of God be lasting, it is not everlasting ; if by the warning-piece of God, you are not alarmed, you shall be consumed ; the longer God is fetching about his hand, the heavier will be the blow when it comes ; “ I gave her space to repent of her fornication, but she repented not ; ” what follows ? “ behold I will cast her into a bed, and they that commit adultery with her,” Rev. ii. 21, 22. The day that begins in mercy may end in judgment. God is silent so long as our sins will let him be quiet ; but know, that God hath vials of wrath filled with indignation, for vessels of wrath fitted for destruction : if God’s mercy do not draw

you to repentance, God's judgments will drive you to destruction ; the sea of damnation shall not be sweetened with a drop of compassion.

Oh ! sinners, either seek out a Saviour to deliver you from the wrath of God, or else find out a shoulder to bear you up under the wrath of God. Oh, that you would consider your ways : hath not God said, that no swearer, no drunkard, no whore-monger, nor adulterer shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ? and such are some of you ; God knows it, and your own consciences know it ; and yet you flatter yourselves, and speak peace to yourselves, when God speaks not a word of peace to you. Oh ! sinners, think of this before the bottomless pit hath shut her mouth upon you : oh, do no longer forget God and your own salvation, Heb. ii. 3. " How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; " If you neglect the great salvation, you cannot escape the great damnation.

Secondly, Believers, let me beseech you to stand fast, and to hold fast that which you have already, Rev. ii. 19. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.—He hath a crown for runners, but a curse for runaways. As you look for happiness as long as God hath a being in heaven ; so God looketh for holiness as long as you have a being on earth. " As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them," Gal. vi. 16. To tread in any other path on earth, it is but to mistake your way to heaven ; whilst you are on this side of

eternity, you must hold the sceptre of grace in your hands, till God set the crown of glory upon your heads; this is the sparkling diamond that is set in the apostle's crown, 2 Tim. iv. 7. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." O believer! it will be your happiness, your glory, your honour another day, if in this day you be found faithful. Oh! do not turn your backs upon the truths of God, as too many in our days have done: they have gone from one religion unto all, till at last they have come from all religion unto none: that man's beginning was in hypocrisy, whose end is in apostasy: indifference in religion is the next step to apostasy from religion.

Oh! do not make him a stone of stumbling, that God hath made a stone for building: if the golden chain of duty will not hold you, the iron chain of darkness shall bind you; if you abuse your liberty in one world, you shall lose your liberty in another; if you had made as much conscience in your liberty as you have had liberty for your conscience, it had been well. That soul was never related to Christ that was never devoted to Christ; there is no obtaining the prize of happiness, without running the race of holiness.

Oh! for the Lord's sake, do not you begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh. O do not put your hand to the plough, and look backward: be not true to the father of lies, and false to the Father of

truth; keep close to the Son of God, to the word of God, to the ordinances of God, to the day of God, to the ministers of God, to the people of God, and you will be safe. Gal. vi. 9. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." I shall wind up all with that saying of Ignatius, 'They who adhere to them who adhere not to truth, shall never inherit the kingdom of God.'



THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

CANT V. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE,—*That JESUS CHRIST is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

MAN is the excellency of the creature, the saint is the excellency of the man; grace is the excellency of the saint; glory is the excellency of grace.

I now proceed to the fourth title, and that is *Everlasting Father*; for this see Isa. ix. 6.

Beloved, we have shewed you from the third title, Mighty God, that Jesus Christ is true and perfect God, a Mighty God, mighty with God, mighty as God, the Great and Mighty God; but now this fourth title holdeth him forth to be a Father: not only a Father, but an Everlasting Father! the Everlasting Father.

The proposition which I shall lay down from the title is this, That God in Christ is a believer's everlasting Father.—That I may clear up this point, I shall lay down these truths :

First, That God, in Christ the Everlasting Father begot himself in us, and us in him ; he is both “the author and finisher of our faith,” Heb. xii. 2. of all our joy, of all our peace, of all our life, of all our salvation : he is a Father ever begetting and bringing forth himself in us ; his light is in us, his love is in us, his nature is in us, his wisdom is in us, his power and strength is in us : “Of his fulness we have all received grace for grace,” John. i. 16. We believers that were in time past, we are in time present, in time to come ; we that were, we that are, we that shall be hereafter, shall receive his fulness. And therefore he is called, The Everlasting Father.

He is the Sun, we are the beams ; he is the Fountain, we are the streams ; he is the Root, we are the branches ; he is the Head, we are the members ; he is the Father, we are the children. And hence it is, that believers are called his offspring : “We are the offspring of God,” saith the apostle.

In creation God hath given us to ourselves, but in redemption he hath given himself to us ; it is a greater favour to be converted than created ; yea, far better to have no being than not to have a new being ; it is only the new creatures that are heirs of the new Jerusalem.

Secondly, God in Christ calleth all his children by his name:—he putteth his name upon them.

Do you mark, sirs, “I will write upon them the name of my God,” in Rev. iii. 12. The saints are called godly from God; Christians from Christ; spiritual from the Spirit; and heavenly from heaven, because their conversation is there, because their Head is there, and they be heirs of heaven.—So the wicked be called, devilish, from the devils; and the cursed, from the curses; and worldlings, from the world; and sinners from sin.—O the great difference that there is betwixt the names of the saints and the names of the wicked!—The ungodly be called dogs, vipers, swine, thorns, and ravening wolves, who lick up, and suck the blood of the innocent; but the saints they are called jewels, treasures, kings, doves, lilies, and heirs of the kingdom of glory; and hence it is, that some good men have gloried more in their name Christian, than in their name emperor; and have thought it a greater honour to be a member of Christ, than to be a king upon a throne; a greater honour to be one of Christ’s little ones, than one of the world’s great ones. Indeed, sirs, a good heart is better than a great estate; inward holiness is better than outward happiness; a Christ without honour is better than honour without Christ; piety without prosperity is better than prosperity without piety; goodness without greatness is better than greatness without goodness.—This is the second.

Thirdly, God in Christ is a Father who is tender and full of bowels towards his poor children : when we were full of blood, then he was full of bowels : Christ is more tender of his body mystical, than he was of his body natural ; he suffered his body natural to be hungry, to be thirsty, to be weary, to hang upon the cross, to bleed upon the cross, to suffer upon the cross, to be pierced and bored with nails upon the cross. Oh he went through the furnace to keep us out of the flames.

But now mark, sirs, for his body mystical, O how tender is he ! He loves them, he pities them, he smiles upon them, he carries them in his bosom, and dandles them on his knees. Oh ! they are the beauty of his eyes, the joy of his heart ; he cannot endure to see them wronged, to see them injured and abused ; every blow they get goes to his very heart : “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” You see how tender Christ is of his body mystical. This is our Jonas, who threw himself into the sea of his Father’s wrath, to save us from perdition, and he hath opened the gates of heaven, to let us into salvation. This is the third.

Fourthly, God in Christ is a Father that layeth up for his children : he gives them something in possession, but more in reversion ; a little in hand, and a great deal in hope.

1st, He gives them something in hand : he layeth out for us, he gives us the air to breathe in, and the earth to tread upon ; he gives us the sun, the moon,

and the stars, wind, water, and fire : he giveth us the fishes of the sea, the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of the air.—Poor man liveth by death ; our natural life is preserved by the death of the creature, and our spiritual life by the death of our Saviour ; so that I may say, we live by death. It is man's duty to serve God, since God hath made all the world to serve him : in 1 Tim. vi. 17. saith the apostle, “ Who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.”—Mark, he doth not only give us some things, but all things ; not only all things, but all things richly to enjoy.

2dly, God in Christ is a Father that layeth up for his children, as well as layeth out, in Psal. xxxi. 19. “ Oh how great is thy goodness that thou hast laid up for them that fear thee !” David wonders at it, “ oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up !” Mark the words, so in 2 Tim. iv. 8. “ Hence is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” What only for you Paul ? No, not only for me, but for all them that love his appearing.—So again, see another scripture for this, 1 Cor. ii. 9. “ As it is written,” saith the apostle, “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” Why, sirs, what is this which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive ? Why, mark—“ the things that God hath prepared for them that fear him.”—Oh ! beloved, God gives his children the best portion, the richest portion, the greatest por-

tion : all things be theirs, life is theirs, death is theirs, things present are theirs, and things to come are theirs, God is theirs, Christ is theirs, the Spirit is theirs, heaven is theirs, and what can they have more? In 1 Cor. xxii. 23. God gives his children in this world a talent of grace, and in the world to come a talent of glory : they shall wear Christ's crown above, who wear his cross below.

Fifthly, God in Christ doth protect and defend his children from their enemies, and from Satan, from sin, from the world, from the curse, and from the second death, which is hell : in Rev. ii. 11. " He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death." Mark, a believer may feel the stroke of death, but he shall never feel the sting of death ; the first death may bring his body to corruption, but the second death shall never bring his soul to damnation : though he may live a life that is dying, he shall die a death that is living ; he that is housed in Christ, shall never be housed in hell. God protects his children from all wrongs and injuries, in Psal. lxxxv. 14. " He suffers no man to do them wrong ; yea, he reproves kings for their sakes." Pray, mark the phrase well, sirs : if kings will lay on saints the hands of violence, God will lay on kings the hands of vengeance : He reproves kings for their sakes : if kings will wrong the poor saints for Christ's sake, Christ will reprove kings for the saint's sake : so saith the word of God. They that be gods before men, be but men before God. If

men will throw saints into prison for their piety, God will throw them into hell for their iniquity. Mark what the prophet saith, in Isa. xxx. 31. pray mark the phrase, “Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared;” and if so be the prophet should speak so downright, as though hell was chiefly prepared for great men.

Oh sirs, hell is prepared for great men as well as mean. Those to whom God bestows great mercies, if they abound in great vices, God will inflict great punishment. How shall they be able to lift up their heads before Christ, who do lift up their heads against him? “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ,” Acts iv. 26. Christ will pass a sentence upon every sentence that is past. He that saith, “Come, ye blessed,” will also say, “Go, ye cursed.”—This is the fifth.

Sixthly, God in Christ is a Father that teacheth his children, and instructs his children:—Thy children shall be taught of the Lord, Isa. liv. 13. All God’s children shall be taught of God; God teacheth all his children; and what doth he teach them? Why, among other things he teacheth his children those six lessons:

1st, He teacheth them to deny themselves. A true believer will lay down his lusts at the command of Christ, and his life for the sake of Christ.

2dly, Christ teacheth them contentment. Here is another divine lesson which Christ teaches his children. A believer will be contented to bear the

wrath of man for him, who bore the wrath of God for him.

3rdly, The vanity of the creature. He teacheth us, that all things below are vanity, and vexation of spirit.

4thly, The sinfulness of the heart.

5thly, The deceitfulness of the heart.

6thly, The right knowledge of himself.

Oh, Christians, have you learned these lessons? Then let all your actions be Christ-like, and walk as you have him for an example: he lived to teach us how to live, and he died to teach us how to die; he that will not follow the example of Christ's life, shall never be saved by the merits of his death. As he is the root on which a saint grows, so he is the rule by which a saint squares: if he be not thy Jacob's staff to guide thee to heaven, he will never be thy Jacob's ladder to mount thee up to heaven. We should be as willing to be ruled by Christ, as we are willing to be saved by Christ. God made one Son like to all, that he might make all his sons like to one. If the life of Christ be not your portion, thou art dead.—This is the sixth.

Seventhly, God in Christ is a Father that stamps upon all his children the lovely image of Jesus Christ; they resemble him to the very life. As was said of Constantine's children, 'They resemble their father to the life;' So we may say of believers, they resemble Christ to the life. God will suffer no man to wear the livery of Christ upon him, who hath not the likeness of Christ within him; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

“We all,” saith the apostle, “beholding with an open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Oh! sirs, what a rare jewel is grace! The Lord of grace calls it glory. Mark, from glory to glory; that is, from one degree of grace to another: grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant: grace is glory begun, and glory is grace made perfect; grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace: grace is the seed, glory is the flower; grace is the ring, glory is the sparkling diamond in the ring; grace is the glorious infant, and glory is the perfect man of grace; grace is the spring, glory is the harvest. The soul of man is the cabinet, the grace of God is the jewel; Christ will throw away the cabinet where he finds not the jewel. He that restored us in the image, will restore us to his image.—This is the seventh particular.

Eighthly, God in Christ is a Father, that never dies: other fathers be dead and gone; our father Abraham is dead, our father Isaac is dead, our father Jacob is dead, and others be dead and gone. Oh! but God in Christ is a Father that lives for ever, that loves for ever, that reigns for ever. He is the Father of eternity, in eternity, from eternity, to eternity, Prov. viii. He was always, is always, and shall be always, and he cannot but be always, Rev. i. 8. Christ is the same before time, in time,

and after time, Heb. xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ is the same," saith the apostle, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever."—"Of him, and for him, and to him, and by him, are all things," Rom. xi. 6.

Ninthly, God in Christ is a Father that correcteth his children; all whom God loves he chasteneth, though he loves not to chastise. God had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow! he had one Son without corruption, but no son without correction; Heb. xii. 16. "For whom the Lord loves he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Rev. iii. 16. "As many as I love, I re-buke and chasten." Afflictions are blessings to us, when we bless God for the afflictions: Christ tells us, "That he that will be his disciples, must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him," Matth. xvi. 24. There is a fourfold self, that must be denied for Jesus Christ, or else you cannot be called his disciple.

1. A sinful self. 2. A natural self. 3. A self-righteousness. And, 4. A self-gain, or lucre.

Sinful self is to be destroyed, and natural self is to be denied; we cannot enjoy ourselves till we deny ourselves; God is as far from beating his children for nothing, as he is from beating his children to nothing.

The *Application*. Is it so that God in Christ is a believer's Everlasting Father? Oh then, what is so sweet a good as Christ! and what is so great an evil as sin? Oh! love Christ more, and hate sin

more: Christ bringeth life with him; a life of grace, a life of comfort, a life of glory: but sin bringeth death with it, death of body, death of soul, death here, and death hereafter. Oh! the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel: Abel's blood crieth for vengeance, but Christ's blood crieth for mercy. He is the pearl of great price, for which the rich merchant sold all that he had, and bought it, and found more joy in this pearl, than ever he had with all that he possessed. Oh therefore! let me beseech you that are his children, to love him and to serve him; he is your Everlasting Father, therefore do his will on earth, as the angels do in heaven: you cannot complain of him for want of mercy: so good hath he been to you, as he hath not been wanting to you in any thing, and will you be wanting to him in every thing?

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: "If I then be a Father, where is my honour? if a Master, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. As a father so will he be revered for his goodness. Oh what is that little he desireth of you, to that which he deserveth from you! If honour be not due to him, let it not be bestowed; if it be due to him, let it not be denied; if God do great things for his children, he will not accept of small things from his children. Do but see the outcry that God makes against his own children, Isa. i. 2. "Hear oh heavens, and be astonished, oh earth!" What is the

matter? "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." The nearer the relation, the greater the obligation: Christ is related to them as a lord to his servants, as a father to his children, as a prince to his subjects, as a head to his members: where the relation is nearest, there the provocation is greatest. It is a more pleasant thing to see rebels become children, than it is to see children become rebels.

What mother can endure to see those lips that drew her breasts, suck her blood? Oh! Christians, you are more known to God than others, and therefore you must more acknowledge him than others; you do not look for so much splendour from the burning of a candle as from the shining of the sun, nor so much moisture from the dropping of the bucket as from the dissolving of a cloud; to whom much is given, of them much shall be required. God doth not expect much where little is bestowed, nor accept little where much is received. "Hear ye the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, you only have I known above all the families of the earth," Amos iii. 1, 2. God hath exalted you above all others, and therefore you must do more for God than others. It was a great blemish to Hezekiah, that his returnings was not answerable to his receivings. Oh believers! let me beseech you to do much, to love much, to give much, to pray much, seeing you have received much.

I shall wind up all, with a word of comfort to

you the children of God. Oh! sirs, God in Christ is your Father, your loving Father, your everlasting Father, and you are his children; therefore fear not, it shall go well with you here and hereafter: Luke ii. 32. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "He will withhold no good thing from you," Psal. lxxxiv. 11. He gives grace and glory unto you; grace is the silver link that draws the golden link of glory after it.



THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE,—*That JESUS CHRIST is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

WHEREVER Christ is a Priest for redemption, he is a Prince for dominion; wherever he is a Saviour, there he is a Ruler; where he is a Fountain of happiness, there he is a Fountain of holiness; where he is a Redeemer, there he is a Refiner; wherever he takes a burden from off the creature's back, there he lays a yoke upon the creature's neck. The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us, Isa. xxxiii. 22.

I shall now proceed to the fifth title of Jesus

Christ, which is *Prince of Peace* ; this you have in Isa. ix. 6.

It is the happiness of the church of God, that although they cannot give peace, yet they may get peace ; though they cannot settle it on earth, yet they may seek it from heaven : peace is the well-being of all other enjoyments ; all other mercies suck their livelihood at the breasts of peace : it is the mother of all prosperity ; as the life of old Jacob was wrapt up in the life of the lad Benjamin, so is all happiness wrapt up in peace ; it is the felicity of the saints on earth, and the glory of the angels in heaven. When the old Hebrews wished any happiness to any one, they only used this expression, *Peace be unto you*.

From this title of Christ, I shall lay down two propositions.

First, That Zion's King is a peaceable King.

Secondly, That the Lord Jesus Christ is the PRINCE OF PEACE, is the cause and foundation of a believer's peace.

DOCT. These two points lie full in the words ; but I shall only speak of the latter, *viz.* That Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is the cause and foundation of a believer's peace.

In the prosecution of it, I shall shew you four things—

1. He is the Peace-bringer. 2. The Peace-maker. 3. The Peace-giver. And, 4. He is the Prince of Peace, or the peaceable Prince.

First, Jesus Christ is the Peace-bringer. He brought in everlasting peace by righteousness, and not by a sword, Luke iv. 24. "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men."—Why was the Bread of Life an hungry, but that he might feed the hungry with the bread of life? Why was Rest itself weary, but to give the weary rest? Why was the Prince of Peace in trouble, but that the troubled might have peace? None but the Image of God could restore us to God's image; none but the Beloved of God could make us beloved to God; none but the natural Son could make us sons; none but the Wisdom of God could make us wise; none but the Prince of Peace could bring the God of peace, and the peace of God, to poor sinners; and therefore he is called our Peace, Eph. ii. 14.

Oh what is so sweet a good as Christ! and what so great an evil as sin! the former brings us to joy and peace, the latter brings us to woe and misery. That is the first.

Secondly, He is the Peace-maker, as well as the Peace-bringer. He is the Peace-maker between God and men: sin is the great make-bar between God and the soul; sin is the wall of separation between God and us, and the Prince of Peace makes peace between God and us. He paid all the debts, and took up all the controversies, and blotted out the hand-writing, and hath broken down the partition-wall, and made up the great breach between

God and man : 2 Cor. v. 19. " God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Mark, it is in Christ; so likewise elsewhere. " You who were sometimes afar off, he hath made nigh by the blood of Christ." Oh ! sinners, Christ is our Peace-maker, the Prince of Peace makes peace between God and us ; he reconciles God to men, and men to God ; so that though God might be justly displeased with us, yet in his Son he is well pleased with us ; he is more pleased with a believer for Christ's sake, than he was displeased with him for sin's sake.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is the Peace-giver ; alas ! poor sinners, we have no peace with angels, no peace with conscience, nor one with another, till the Prince of Peace give it to us : " Peace I leave with you, peace I give unto you," saith our Lord unto his disciples, John xiv. 27. Oh ! sirs, he gives peace with God, in Rom. v. 1. " We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ giveth peace to us, which the world cannot take from us ; worldly trouble cannot overcome heavenly peace.

Fourthly, He is a Prince of Peace, or the peaceable Prince : so he is styled not only Peace, but the Prince of Peace. Indeed, beloved, he is all peace to a believer. " Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," speaking of Christ, Prov. iii. 18. Mark, all her paths are peace.

Now, what are these paths. I shall name six to

you. 1. The path of repentance. 2. Of faith. 3. Of truth. 4. Of self-denial. 5. Of obedience. 6. Of holiness.

1st, These are several paths of peace, and peaceable paths; Oh sirs! there is no peace to be found but in the paths of peace! as all his works be great and marvellous, so all his ways are peace and pleasantness.

2ndly, His gospel is a gospel of peace; it is a great mercy to enjoy the gospel of peace, but a greater mercy to enjoy the peace of the gospel.

3rdly, His reward is peace, Isa. lvii. 2. "He shall enter into peace." Here the joys of heaven are called peace. The true sons of peace, and the peaceable sons of truth shall be crowned with peace; they shall enter into peace. And thus, beloved, I have briefly, yea I have fully proved the point—That Jesus Christ is the cause and fountain of a believer's peace.

Uses. Now for the application of the point. I shall reduce it to four heads. 1. For information. 2. For examination. 3. For exhortation. 4. For consolation.

First, By way of information: here we may see what great need we stand in of Jesus Christ. Oh, Christians! Is Jesus Christ the cause and foundation of all our peace? then we have no right or title to peace, but by the Prince of Peace. "We have no peace with God," saith the apostle, "but through our Lord Jesus Christ;" we are reconciled

to God in Christ Jesus; and “we who were afar off,” saith Paul, “are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” We are only acceptable in the Beloved; so that, beloved, it is all in Christ, and through him, that we have our peace. A Christless man is a peaceless man; he hath no peace with God, no peace with angels, no peace with conscience; till we be Christ’s friends, we are our own foes. It is true, a wicked man may speak peace to himself, but God speaks not a jot of peace to him; he may speak peace to himself till he falleth into everlasting flames: God is his enemy, the devil is his foe, angels hate him, all creatures cry for vengeance upon him. Isa. lvii. 21. “There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God;” no, not a word, not a dram of peace to a person who is out of Christ: therefore, oh sirs! consider in what need ye stand of the Prince of Peace.

Secondly, it informs us, that to have peace with our God and Maker is the sweetest and best thing in the world. Oh how infinitely sweet is peace: what is sweeter than peace? Alas! gold is but dust, pleasures are but toys, wit is but a flash, beauty but a blast, honour but a rattle, life but a vapour; oh but peace is better than the sweetest, and better than the best of all those.—1st, Because he that hath peace with God may come boldly to God, Heb. vi. 16. 2ndly, He that hath peace with God, hath communion and fellowship with God, 1 John i. 3. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and

with his Son Jesus Christ. *3rdly*, He that is at peace with God, is a son of God. Peace is of all others, the most sweet ; oh ! it is wine to comfort us, and bread to nourish us, it makes a man live comfortably, and die cheerfully.

Thirdly, If Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, be the cause and foundation of all our peace ; why then, he that wants the Prince of Peace, wants all good things ; he is the miserablest man in the world, that is without Christ ; he wants reconciliation with God, an interest in Christ ; he wants the sealing and comforting of the Spirit ; he wants justification, sanctification, and adoption ; he wants pardon of sin, and freedom from the dominion of sin ; he wants that favour which is better than life, that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, and that faith, a dram of which is more worth than a king's ransom ; he wants those riches which perish not, those evidences for heaven that fail not, that love which dies not, that kingdom which shakes not. Oh, beloved ! how many things doth that poor soul want, which wanteth a Christ ! He is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. Christ is a pearl, whosoever hath him can never be poor, and whosoever wants him can never be rich ; did but men see all in this pearl of great price, then they would sell all for this pearl of great price.

Fourthly, If Jesus Christ be the cause and foundation of our peace, then it is our greatest concernment to get into favour with the Prince of

Peace; many seek the ruler's favour, saith the scripture, but oh seek ye the favour of this prince: poor souls, without him there is no mercy, no peace, no grace, no glory, no heaven, no crown, no eternal life: for "this is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3.

Use 2. By way of examination and self-denial The trial of ourselves is the ready way to the knowledge of ourselves. Oh Christians! would you see your God? Then cast your eyes upward. Would you see yourselves? Then cast your eyes inward. Contemplation is a glass to see your God in. It is of greater concernment to know the state of our hearts, than to know the estate of the kingdom. And therefore, I beseech you, examine yourselves, that you may know yourselves, that you may know whose you are while you live, and whither you will go when you die, and what will become of you to all eternity. Oh, sirs! bring yourselves to the trial, and try yourselves, and see whether you are in the faith, and the faith in you. Faith is such a grace, that a man cannot be saved without it, and not a man can be damned that hath it.

Oh see whether you be in the narrow way that leadeth to life, or in the broad way that leadeth to death; whether your hearts be chairs for vice to sit in, or thrones for grace to rule on: whether you are one of Christ's spouses, or the Devil's harlots; whether you are heirs of heaven or hell; whether

ye be Satan's bondmen or God's freemen. Examination is the beaten path to perfection, 1 Cor. i. 25. "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."—It is seldom that the sparkling diamond of a great estate, is set in the gold-ring of a gracious heart. A man may be great, with Saul, and graceless; rich with Dives, and miserable; the richest are oftentimes the poorest, and the poorest are oftentimes the richest. Oh how many threadbare souls may there be found under silken coats and purple robes! they who live most downward, die most upward: a sight of ourselves in grace, will certainly bring us to a sight of ourselves in glory, those sins shall never make a hell for us, that have been a hell to us.

Use 3. But it is time for me to turn my speech into an exhortation; and, oh that you would encourage me with your resolution to obey my message this day; that is, to make your peace with the Prince of Peace, that you may be the true sons of peace, and the peaceable sons of truth, that you may be righteous before God, and holy before men; that you may gloriously shine in glory: and that you may have peace with God and with angels, and with your own consciences, and with one another. Well, sirs, what say you in answer to the message? Shall the Prince of Peace be your love and lord; your nearest and dearest, your joy and your delight? Will you kiss the Son? Will you make your peace with the God of Peace, and give up your souls and

lives to be ruled by him? These things I exhort you to do, and God expects them at your hand. But that this exhortation may stay with you, I shall back it with some pressing considerations.

First, Consider God's goodness and good will towards men; God has given you rich means, that you may make and secure your peace with God. *First*, He hath given you the law and the gospel. *Secondly*, He hath generously given time and opportunity. *Thirdly*, Mercies and afflictions; mercies to draw you, and afflictions to drive you. *Fourthly*, He hath given you preachers, both inward and outward preachers; by outward preachers, I mean the ministers of Christ, who beseech you, and entreat you, for Christ's sake to be reconciled to God, and make your peace with God: by inward preachers, I mean your own conscience, that judgeth you, and checketh you, and reproveth you for your sins and abominations. *Fifthly*, He hath given you precepts and promises: precepts commanding you to do, and promises assuring you of a glorious reward for your doing. *Sixthly*, The Spirit and convictions, Gen. vi. 37. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Oh! how long will you stand out against God? What have ye to say against this? How can you answer this, when you and I shall appear before God's judgment-seat? Have you any thing to say against this? Oh! sad will be your end, unless you make your peace with God: and therefore (seeing God has given these things to you,

that you may make and secure your peace with him) he that liveth in sin without repentance, shall die in sin without forgiveness. This is the first.

Secondly, God inviteth and wooeth you to come and make your peace with him: Isa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

Beloved, here are three *comes* in this text, to shew the infinite willingness of God to save poor sinners; so in Rev. xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And him that is athirst, let him Come: (here are three *comes* again in this text.) And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." What, are there none thirsty among you? Do none thirst for Christ, and grace, and heaven? If you come, sirs, here you may have grace, and mercy, and happiness. Now, for the Lord's sake, consider wherefore is all this, but that you may make your peace with God? Shall the God of heaven call, and you will not hear? What, will you rather stay in your sins, and die, than go to Christ for life? Oh! sirs go to the Prince of Peace for peace, that you may have peace; if you do not lay your sins to your hearts, that you may be humbled for them, God will lay them to your charge that you may be damned for them.

A *Third* consideration is this: either you must

taste of God's goodness, or of his fury : there is not a man, woman, or child among you, but must partake of the one or the other ; your portion will be either joy or sorrow ; either desolation, or consolation : if you be not trees for bearing, you must be trees for burning ; if you are not for fruit, you must be for the flames : if you do not swim in the water-works of repentance, you shall burn in the fire-works of vengeance ; if you do not go and make your peace with God, that you may have heaven, you shall go to hell for not making your peace ; one of them you must do. Oh ! sirs, I have set life and death, heaven and hell, bitter and sweet, before you this day. Will you make your peace with God, or no ? Will you still go in a way of wickedness, breaking his laws, grieving his Spirit ? Will you die a natural death, before you live a spiritual life ? I say then if you live so, and die so, you shall be damned with the damned, and punished with the punishment of hell, and so sent to hell with loads of wrath upon your backs. You shall have your part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. " He that believes, shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned," saith our Lord, Mark xvi. 16. Oh ! sirs, it is better to repent without perishing, than to perish without repenting ; therefore look to it as well as you will. Are you able to deal with God ? Alas ! alas ! all the world is but like a drop of water in comparison of God : and therefore

make your peace with him, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation!"

Fourthly, Consider what the damned in hell would give for the offers of mercy that are now offered to you; certainly they would give ten thousand worlds if they had them, for these opportunities that you enjoy. Should God say to poor wretches that are suffering in hell for their drunkenness upon earth, and their whoring and abominations as he doth to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" oh! how earnestly would they run and catch the word out of God's mouth! Oh! beloved, the devils are too well acquainted with misery, to put by mercy if it were offered to them. But alas! alas! poor damned wretches, there is no dram of mercy for them; no, not so much as a drop of water for them, not one drop of water to cool their flaming tongues. Oh, that you would consider this, and make your peace with God before death comes, which may be the next night, for ought ye know; if ye lose your golden seasons, ye lose your souls. Oh therefore make your peace with God, that it may not be said of you, as it was once said of Jerusalem, in Luke xix. 42. "Oh that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that concern thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes." Here was a weeping word, a sad word to Jerusalem. Alas! now it is hid from their eyes; their golden season is gone; there is no peace to be had: and therefore I beg

of you, as though I were condemned, and begging of my life ; so I beg of you in the bowels of Christ, and for your soul's sake, make your peace with God.

Fifthly, Seriously consider the multitude of sins thou hast been guilty of, even more than the hairs of thy head, or the sand on the sea-shore, or the stars in the heavens, which are innumerable ; saith David, "They are more than the hairs of my head," Psal. xl. 12. Alas ! one of thy sins were enough to sink thee into hell for ever : what advantage doth Dives reap in hell of all those delicate banquets that he had on earth ? Oh ! think on that time, wherein ye shall be ashamed of nothing but your wickedness, and glory in nothing but your holiness.

Sin, it is like a serpent in the bosom that is stinging, or like a thief in the closet that is stealing, or like poison in the stomach that is poisoning, or like a sword in the bowels that is killing : some are in hell already for the same sins thou livest in, and if thou livest and diest without Christ, thou shalt ere long be with them : therefore, I say, make peace with God.

Sixthly, Consider that there is more bitterness following upon sins ending, than ever there was sweetness flowing from sins acting : you that see nothing but well in its commission, will suffer nothing but woe in its conclusion ; it is better here to forego the pleasures of sin, than hereafter to

undergo the pain of sin: you that sin for your profits, will never profit by your sins: he that likes the works of sin to do them, will never like the wages of sin to have them. Sin is both shameful and damnable, it shameth men in this world, and damneth them in the other world; it is like Judas, that at first salutes, but at last betrays us; or like Delilah, to smile in our face, and betray us into our enemies' hands. Oh! sinners, think of this, and part with your sins, that you may meet with your Saviour, and make your peace with him.

Seventhly, Consider the heavy judgment that hangs over your heads. You lie open to all the judgments in this life, and torments in the life to come. Oh! you sinners, the days are hastening upon you, wherein you have misery without mercy, sorrow without succour, pain without ease, punishment without pity, and torment without end, unless repentance do prevent, 2 Cor. i. 7, 8, 9. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Oh! let the hearing of this prevent the feeling of this, poor sinner.

Eighthly and *Lastly*, If none of the former arguments or considerations prevail with you to make your peace with the Prince of Peace, yet let this

one, I beseech you, and that is, the readiness and willingness of God to give Christ, and Christ to give himself to you. Oh ! sinners, is God willing to give his Son, and are you willing to receive his Son ? Consider the willingness of God, “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him.” Mark, sinners here, “ Behold, I stand,” Who ? I that have heaven to give ; I that have a crown to give ; that have all joys to give ; I that have myself to give, I stand and knock. Do you see this, poor sinners ? Who is it that stands at the door of your hearts and knocks ? Who ? it is the King of saints, the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God : and will you not open to him ? What are you unwilling to be saved, to go to heaven, and to be happy for ever ? What, are you unwilling to be delivered from Satan, from sin, and from the flames of hell ? If you be willing then, make your peace with God, for God is willing to open heaven for you, if you be willing to open your hearts to him ; he is willing to save you, if you be but willing to be saved ; he is willing to give a Christ, if you be willing to receive a Christ : and therefore, poor souls, let these considerations provoke you to go for life to the Lord of life, to go for peace to the Prince of Peace, to go for grace to the God of grace. Were men so diligent as to do their best, God is so indulgent, he would forgive the worst.

THE ELECT PRECIOUS.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE,—*That JESUS CHRIST is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

WHO can be weary of preaching, or hearing, or reading, or learning Christ? who is so precious and lovely? Mahomet is the Turks' love; Moses is the Jews' love; the Pope is the Papists' love; but Christ is a believer's love.

I shall now make some entrance upon Christ's sixth, famous, and lovely title, *The Elect Precious*; this you have in 1 Pet. ii. 6.

From this excellent title, I shall lay down two propositions:

DOCT. I. That Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is God the Father's elect. I pray mark, sirs, there is a three-fold elect of God.

First, The elect Jesus Christ; Isa. xiii. 1. "Behold my servant, my elect," saith the Father, speaking of Christ.

Secondly, The elect angels; 1 Tim. v. 21. "I charge thee before God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels."

Thirdly, The elect saints; and for this see Col. iii. 1. "Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercy."

But alas! what are the elect angels, or the elect saints, to the elect precious! it is only the blessed

Jesus that is the Elect Precious, and precious to the elect.

But I shall not stand on this point, but proceed to the second.

DOCT. II. And that this is, That a crucified and glorified Christ, is very precious to all believing saints.

In handling this precious point, I shall shew you five things.—1. That he is precious. 2. That he is most precious. 3. He is all precious. 4. He is always precious. And, 5. Why he is so precious.

First, That he is precious: Jesus Christ is precious three ways; to God, to angels, and to saints.

1st, To God the Father; and this will appear by what God the Father hath said himself of the Son, Isa. xlii. 1. “My elect in whom my soul delighteth.” Here you see, Christians, what God saith to Christ; the soul of God delights in the Son of God. So again, Matth. iii. 17. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Mark here, not only pleased, but well pleased. Oh! how precious is Christ to God the Father.

The Lord Jesus, though he was a man of sorrows, yet he was not a man of sin; he had correction, but not corruption; he that was a Way to others, never went out of the way himself. Jesus Christ must needs be precious to the Father, because he never displeased him in any thing, but pleased him in every thing; John viii. 27. Christ there speaking of himself, “I do always the things that please him,”

saith our Lord Jesus. Oh! friends, it will be your glory, your crown, your honour, and happiness another day, if in this day you do these things that please God: so did Christ here, "I do always those things that please him." Christ went about doing good; he must needs please the Father, for he went about doing good; Acts x. 38. He did not always stay in one place, but he went about doing good. And truly, sirs, if people were not made better by his coming, they might thank themselves, for he went about doing good. As he was never ill employed, he was never unemployed; as he opened the scriptures to our understanding, so he opened our understanding to the scriptures. That is the first.

2dly, He is very precious to the angels as well as to the Father; the angels were very joyful at the birth of Christ their Lord; they sang praises to God on high, Luke ii. 13, 14. See with what joy and triumph the angels sang at the birth of Christ: Oh! how precious is Christ to the elect angels? the angels adore him, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. The Lord of hosts is worshipped by an host of angels, "Let all the angels of God worship him." The angels desire to pry into the mysteries of the gospel of grace; as you may see, 1 Pet. i. 2. The angels, though they are glorious to all eternity, look upon it as not below them to pry into the mysteries of Christ. Oh! sirs, the angels

are desirous to know these things which we neglect to know.

3rdly, The angels stand before him as waiting-men to serve God, and to serve such as are God's ; when he bids them go, they go ; come, they come ; do this, and they do it : they do all his commands, Psal. ciii. 20. Jesus Christ is the Creator of angels, the Lord of angels, the Prince of angels, the Head of angels ; Col. i. 16. The Son of God is very precious to the angels of God. Do you see, sirs, how precious Christ is to the angels of God ! and well he may, for indeed he is a precious jewel in the cabinet of grace.

4thly, Jesus Christ is precious to the saints, as well as to his Father and angels, 1 Pet. ii. 7. You have there a full text to this purpose, " Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious." Mark here, unto you ; what you ? To you therefore that believe, he is precious. He is precious indeed to them that believe, and no wonder ; he is a believer's all. Now that which is his all must needs be precious : Christ is his all, he is all that he hath, he is all that he enjoys : Christ is all that is worth ; he is all that they are, they are no such thing without him ; they have nothing without him : whatever they are worth, it is he that makes them worth it ; it is not worth a man's while to live, unless he live in Christ ; Christ is the gain of a believer, living and dying ; so that whatever is good for a believer,

he must say, for this I am beholden to Christ, saith he. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's.

Now, sirs, let me give you a more particular account of the Christian's worth, and inventory of his estate; and all along I shall shew you that Christ is the worth of all that: What is it that makes a believer so precious and excellent? Why, it is such things as these; 1. He is a living man. 2. He is a seeing man. 3. He is a person of honour. 4. He hath a great deal of joys, and hope of more. 5. He is righteous and holy; and, in a word, he is saved at last.

These are things that make a Christian so excellent a person, and he hath none of these but by Christ, and he hath all this alone by Christ.

First, This is the excellency of a Christian, that he is a living man: there is no man on earth can, in a spiritual sense, be called a living man, but a believer; all men be dead men, but they that believe. You know that it was said of the prodigal, while he lived in his sins he was dead, "This is my son that was dead, and is now alive:" when he believed, then he was alive. Now, sirs, as it is in things of nature, life is the most valued thing which we have, skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life: a man will rather part with his livelihood than with his life, because his life is so dear to him. Now, beloved, if natural life be so desirable a thing, what is a spiritual life, that which in scripture is called the life of God? Now the be

believer is the only living man, every other man is spiritually dead ; but now, how comes the believer to life? By whom doth he live? Why, it is by Christ Jesus; Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ, notwithstanding I live." What, crucified and yet live? Yes, Christ was crucified, and yet lives : and so did Paul in resemblance and conformity to Christ; "I live," saith he, "yet not I, but Christ which liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God." So that Paul will not call his life his own, but only as he derived it from Christ. Christ liveth in him more than himself liveth.

Secondly, The excellency of a believer lies in this, that he is the seeing man; it is the sight which puts the difference between person and person; it is a sad thing to be born blind, or to be blinded after a man is born. Now all men are either born blind, or blinded after they are born, or both. Now, beloved, would you know how precious sight is? Ask a blind man who once could see. We read of a poor man who comes running to Christ, and cries out, "O Lord, that I may receive my sight." Now, sirs, if in nature having the sight of our eyes be a thing that makes us so much more excellent than otherwise we would be without it, oh then how much value should we put upon this spiritual sight which refers to our souls! We can much better want the eyes of our heads, than the eyes of our understanding: now, in a spiritual sense, there is

no seeing man, but a believer; no man saw Christ savingly, but they who saw him believably; every man but a believer walks in darkness; nay, he is in darkness. The apostle, Eph. v. 8. tells somewhat to his purpose, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

In the Lord Jesus Christ, you see a believer doth see, and how he comes to see; it is in the Lord that he sees: he was as dark as others, and as blind as others, till he was in the Lord; and no sooner was he in the Lord, but he was light in the Lord. This is the second.

Thirdly, The excellency of a believer lies in this, That he is a very beautiful and honourable person. Now beauty and honour be taking, ravishing things of this world; now all but believers be deformed persons; there is no beauty nor comeliness why they should be desired. But now the believer is a very lovely beautiful person; he is so in the eyes of God, Ezek. xvi. 13, 14. "And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thy ears!" and so he goes on, and saith, "Thou wast exceeding beautiful, and didst prosper into a kingdom." But now mark how she came by this beauty in the next verse; "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through the comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God;" she was not only beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, but she had her beauty also from the Lord: as they are thus lovely and taking in the eyes of God, so

also of good angels and saints too. For as glorious a place as heaven is, the angels think it not below them to wait on the image and pictures of Christ here below, that is, to wait upon believers, and to be the Lord's guardians here upon earth; Heb. i. 14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" But this is not all they do for them, they will not leave them when they die, but take those lovely souls and transport them to a better country than ever this world was to them; for it is no paradox to say this, that there is no believer goes to heaven, but he goes in the arms of angels, Luke xvi. 12. In the parabolical history of Dives and Lazarus, saith the text, "Lazarus died (believing Lazarus died,) and his soul was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom," that is, to heaven. Oh what an honour have believers at their death, that the very angels transport their souls to heaven! and they are also very lovely and honourable in the eyes of all good men. The truth is, there is scarce any man fit company for believers, but believers; and therefore, saith the apostle, "be not unequally yoked," believers with unbelievers.

Now good men be much taken with a believer, though he be a stranger to them on all accounts; they are very fond of one another in this world, and had rather suffer together than live with other men. Now, this makes a believer so excellent, that he is thus beautiful and honourable in the eyes of God,

and good angels, and good men. Now all this beauty and honour they have from Christ; see the text before quoted, To you who believe, he is an honour, so the word may be used: it is Christ that makes him honourable in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of good angels and good men; and all that beauty and honour they have, it is through Christ, he is their worth in every capacity.

Fourthly, That which makes a believer so excellent is, that he hath joy: all other men have no joy, but that which is not worth the having: alas! the joy of the hypocrite, what is it, but the crackling of thorns under a pot? But now, a believer hath a joy that no man intermeddleth with, nor no man partakes of: but how where hath he that joy? Why in and from the Lord: "These things I speak," saith Christ, "that my joy may be in you:" they have it from the Lord: they rejoice in the Lord, "We rejoice in Christ Jesus," saith Paul, "and have no confidence in the flesh."

Fifthly, Have they hope? it is from Christ: and indeed none have hope but they: for without God, and without Christ, and without hope, are put together, in Eph. ii. 12. But now the believer hath good hopes, and this bears him up many times. Alexander thought this so brave a thing, that when he gave to one man whole countries, and to another vast treasures, and being asked what he would keep for himself? saith he, I will keep hope. For he thought it enough for so brave and great a soul as

his, to hope for that which would make him to do whatsoever he was able to do, or any one could think. The hopes of mercy, and joy, and peace, will carry a man through thousands of difficulties. Now the believer hath this hope, but he hath it from Christ, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Sixthly, Are they wise, are they righteous, are they holy, and none so but they? Every sinner is a fool; and therefore in scripture is called by the name of a foolish man: he plays the fool all the time he spends out of the fear of God; all sinning-time is a fooling-time. Now the believer is a wise man, and he is a righteous man, and a holy man; but how he comes to be thus now, take an account of it in 1 Cor. i. 30. Pray mark here now, Christ is the all of a believer; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

So that you see if a believer be a wise man, he may thank Christ for it; if he be a righteous man, if he be a holy man, he may thank God for it: "For He of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Lastly, In a word, they are saved: and indeed this is the compliment, ay, the compliment of all the rest; are they saved? and none are saved but believers: "For," saith Christ, "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned." The believer is already in the state of

salvation, and the unbelieving is in the state of damnation : by nature we are all children of wrath ; now faith in Jesus Christ is the means that God hath appointed to free us from being children of wrath. Now he that believes is past this, he shall not be condemned, he shall be saved ; and how comes he to be saved ? It is by Christ, by believing in Christ. Oh ! who is the Saviour but Christ ? To be in Christ is heaven below, and to be with Christ is heaven above ; but there is no being with Christ above, if we were not in Christ here below.

Thus you see, beloved, whatever it is that makes a believer so excellent and precious, it is Christ that makes him worth all : he hath it all from Christ, Christ is his all in all. Now put all this together, and see if there be any great reason that Christ should be precious to believers.

Secondly, As Jesus Christ is precious, so he is most precious. Oh, sirs ! angels are precious, saints are precious, friends are precious, heaven is precious ; but a Christ, a Saviour, is ten thousand times more precious than these : a believer had rather have Christ without heaven, than heaven without Christ : “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee,” Psal. lxxiii. 25. Let a believer search heaven and earth, and yet he will find nothing comparable to God. To be like to him, it is our happiness ; and to draw near to him, is our holiness. You will see, beloved, life is precious, freedom is precious, health

is precious, peace is precious, food and raiment are precious, gold and silver are precious, kingdoms and crowns are precious ; indeed they are, in their places, but nothing in comparison of Jesus Christ. Mark, sirs, what the apostle saith, Phil. iii. 8. “ Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.” I count all things loss ; nay, that is not all, I count them but dung that I may win Christ. What is our life but a warfare ? And what is our life but a thoroughfare ? It is only the best of beings that can bestow the best of blessings ; oh how good is a believer’s God, that doth not only shorten his pilgrimage for him, but sweetens his pilgrimage to him ? Oh, Christ is a believer’s all, and therefore he is more precious than all ! he hath all in Christ, and nothing out of Christ : there is no such thing as a believer without him. By faith we have an interest in Christ, we have an interest in God, and by having an interest in God, we have an interest in all things : the believer is the only blessed man, the only happy man, the only rich man, Rev. xxi. 7. “ He that overcometh shall inherit all things.” Oh what a glorious inheritance are they born to, that are new born ! All things are theirs, and they shall inherit all things : what can they desire more than all ? All that Christ hath is theirs ; his wisdom is theirs to teach them, his love is theirs to pity them, his Spirit is theirs to comfort them, his righteousness is theirs to justify them, his power is theirs to

protect them, and his glory is theirs to crown them. Oh, sirs! Christ cannot but be most precious to a believer, because all his precious comforts come from Christ. The Lord Jesus is fairer than the fairest, sweeter than the sweetest, nearer than the nearest, and dearer than the dearest, and richer than the richest, and better than the best. The Elect Precious is of all the most precious,

1st, Because that he is the greatest gift that God can give, or that we can receive. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:" this is more than if he had given us all the world; for God hath but one Son, and can make no more sons: but God can make more worlds at his pleasure: this gift is God himself, and God can give us no greater gift than himself. We may say, as one said to Cæsar, when he gave him a great reward, This is too great a gift, said he, for me to receive: But it is not too much for me to give, said Cæsar.

2dly, Because he is the richest gift that ever was given, for Christ is all in all. If he hath given us Christ, he will give us all things else, Rom. viii. 36. He is the one thing needful, that brings all things: yea, he is the gift of God; "If thou knewest the gift of God, (saith our Saviour, John iv. 10.) thou wouldst have asked for it, and begged it of me." Why is Christ called the gift of God? Surely God hath given us more gifts than one: true, but as the sun is more worth than all the stars, so this gift excels them all; according to the proverb, 'We

bless not God for stars when the sun shines ; for when the sun shines the stars appear not.'

3rdly, Because he is the chiefest gift that God hath to give : other gifts he gives promiscuously to good and bad ; so that as no man knoweth love or hatred by any thing that is before him, Eccl. ix. 1. Judas had the bag, and Dives fared deliciously every day, when Lazarus would have been glad of his crumbs ; but God never gives this gift to any but whom he loves with his dearest, special, and eternal love.

Suppose some prince would woo a great lady, and had a jewel worth a million, it may be he would scatter pieces of silver, or give some slight tokens of favour unto the servants : but the rich jewel, that he gives to his spouse ; this jewel is Christ. Abraham may give to Ishmael a bottle of milk ; but Isaac had the inheritance.

4thly, The Lord Jesus is the rarest gift of all others whatsoever : Christ is a gift given to very few ; here one, and there another : millions of millions perish for not knowing and trusting in Christ. Oh ! what a rare jewel is Christ ! Though our souls are more worth than a world, yet a world of souls is not worth Christ ; it is he that makes us blessed in life, happy in death, and glorious after death.

5thly, The Lord Jesus is the sweetest gift of all others ; for if God gives his Christ, then he gives us all other gifts in his love, and they become a blessing sweetened to us : they that have this good

shall want no good: "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 10. Now put all this together, and you will see Christ to be most precious.

Thirdly, He is altogether precious. I told you the last day that Christ is precious; and indeed I told you the truth; for they are not only my sayings, but God's sayings, therefore they are true: he is all precious, there is nothing in Christ but what is precious; he is amiable and desirable: he is fulness and sweetness, and greatness and goodness, light and life, and happiness. Believers enjoy all things in Christ: in all things he is the joy of a believer's life, and the life of a believer's joy. Oh! sirs, Christ is precious, he is very precious, he is most precious, he is always precious, he is altogether precious to the believing soul.

1st, His name is precious, he is called a precious Stone, Isa. xxviii. 16. Christ is there called a precious Stone. *2dly*, His blood is precious, in 1 Pet. i. 9. His blood is there called precious Blood: ay, and well it may, for a drop of his blood is worth a sea of ours; and yet he died our death, that we might live his life. *3rdly*, Faith is precious, in 2 Pet. i. 1. Faith is there called precious faith, the least grain of faith is more worth than all the gold in Europe. *4thly* His promises are precious, in 2 Pet. i. 4. "Giving to us exceeding great and precious promises." Christ's promises are called great and pre-

cious promises. Why great, and why precious? They are great for extent, and precious for their excellencies. *5thly*, His gifts and graces are precious, Prov. iii. 15. "More precious than rubies;" all things thou canst desire are not to be compared to them. *6thly*, His members are precious, Isa. xliii. 4. "Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." Here you see the members of Christ are called precious.—A believer indeed is a raven in the world's eye, but a dove in Christ's eye: the saints in the world's account are dung and dirt; but in God's account they are jewels and pearls; graceless men look upon God's people as cast-aways, but God will give whole kingdoms for their ransom; wicked men may call the saints factious, but God calls the saints precious. Indeed, sirs, the scoffers and jeerers of the people of God in other ages, were but bunglers to the scoffers and jeerers of the people of God in our age: well, there is a time coming, when Christ will laugh at the ungodly, for now laughing at ungodliness. Though holiness be that which a sinner scorns, yet holiness is that which a Saviour crowns; as you expect happiness from God above, so God expects holiness from you below; therefore, be godly as the godly. *7thly*, The reproaches of Christ are precious; Heb. xi. 26. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." I beseech you mark, is it not here said, that Moses did esteem the person of Christ, or the

ISAIAH LIII. 3.



THE MAN OF SORROWS.

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members of Christ, or the privileges of Christ, or the glory of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt? Oh! beloved, the worst of his is better than the best in the world; Christ's cross is sweeter than the world's crown; the reproaches of Christ are greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Will you give me leave to tell you that which few believe; and this is, that afflictions be good and precious. Few believe this truth, that afflictions are good and precious; and let me tell you, it is a great truth; and this I shall make appear.

Now, beloved, if I can prove that afflictions and reproaches for Christ be good and precious, which is the worst of him, then you will conclude with me, that Christ is all precious.

1st, That must needs be good that comes from the only good; now, afflictions come from God, who is only good: Psal. xxxix. 9. "I was dumb and opened not my mouth," saith David: why? "because thou didst it." "I was silent and did not speak:" Why, David? "Because thou didst it."

2dly, That must needs be good which was suffered by the sweetest good: now, afflictions were endured by Christ who is the sweetest good: "He was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 3.

3rdly, That must needs be good, which fits and prepares us for a glorious estate, the eternal good.

Now, affliction doth this : “ It was good for me that I was afflicted.” Sirs, do you believe king David ? Will you believe David a Christian ? Will you believe David a saint ? Will you believe David a man after God’s own heart ? Why, he tells, It was good for him he was afflicted. But you will say, Why was it so good ? Look in the 6th verse, and there is the reason ; for, saith he, “ Before I was afflicted I went astray.” A very satisfactory answer ; and therefore it was good for me I was afflicted. So again, in 2 Cor. iv. 17. “ For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us”—What work they ? “ a far more exceeding weight of glory.” Do you know what they work for us ? Why, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Oh Christians ! under your greatest troubles lieth your greatest treasures : afflictions are good, but not pleasant ; sin is pleasant, but not good : but there is more evil in a drop of corruption, than there is in the sea of afflictions. God by affliction separates the sin he hates so deadly, from the soul he loves so dearly ; by the greatest affliction, God teacheth us the greatest instruction ; and a believer, when he lies under that hand that doth afflict him, he lies in that heart that doth affect him ; believers are crucified by the world, that they may be crucified to the world ; the flesh is an enemy to suffering, because suffering is an enemy to the flesh—it may make a man an early courtier, but it will never make a man an heavenly martyr ; they that carry not the

yoke of Christ upon their necks, will never carry the cross of Christ upon their backs : but a believer studies more how to adorn the cross, than how to avoid the cross : none so courageous as those that are religious : a believer never falls asleep for Jesus, till he falls asleep in Jesus : some glory in that which is their shame, and shall we be ashamed of that which is our glory ? It is an honour to be dishonoured for Jesus Christ : tell me, oh believer, is not Christ with his cross, better than the world with its crown ? Suppose, Christian, the furnace be hot, seven times hotter, it is but to make you seven times better : fiery trials make golden Christians ; sin hath brought many a believer unto suffering, and suffering hath kept many a believer from sinning : they that here be crossed for well-living, shall hereafter be crowned for well-dying : the losing of our heads, makes way for receiving of our crown : God will season our vessels with water of affliction, before he pours in the wine of glory. By this you see, beloved, that the reproaches of Christ are precious. It is better to be preserved in brine than to rot in honey.

4thly, Jesus Christ is always precious to believers ; he is more precious to them than a thousand worlds : because he is always with them, in all their trials, and in all their troubles, and in all their straits, and in all their afflictions. In all their afflictions he was afflicted, saith the text. Oh

sirs, who would not suffer with such a companion as this? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2. Do you see this, Christians, he is with you in the fire, in the water, in the prison, in all places, and at all times: He never leaves you, nor forsakes you, Heb. xiii. 5. He beds and boards with you; he lieth down, and riseth up with you: He is called a friend, and indeed he is our best friend: Cant. v. 16. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

1. Jesus Christ is a faithful friend. 2. He is a prudent friend. 3. A careful or providing friend. 4. A compassionate friend. 5. A constant friend. 6. A loving friend. 7. An everlasting friend.

He loves us to the end, and there is no end of his love; he that gave his image to us, loves his image in us; Jesus Christ gave himself to us, and for us; he loves us in himself, and as himself. Oh! what a sweet friend is Christ! God, in giving Christ to us, gave his very heart for us. Now, beloved, how can Jesus Christ be but always precious to a believer, who is thus always with a believer?

Fifthly, and Lastly, Why is Jesus Christ so precious to believers?

First, Because he is a believer's life; Col. iii. 4. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then

shall we appear with him in glory.”—There is a three-fold life that flows from Christ; a life of grace, a life of comfort, a life of glory.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is precious to believers, because he is their light; alas! alas! till we be in Christ, we must be in darkness: it is in his light, that we see light, Eph. v. 14. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Thirdly, Christ is precious to believers, because he is their food: “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood drink indeed;” John vi. 55. Oh! what choice fare have they to feed on, that have Christ to feed on! Oh! soul whatsoever thou art, that hast not Christ to feed on, thy bread is but perishing bread.

Fourthly, Christ is precious to believers, because he is their strength: take a man that is out of Christ, he hath no strength to withstand or overcome; “Without me,” saith Christ, “ye can do nothing:” John xv. 5. “When we were without strength, Christ died for us.” To be without Christ, and to be without strength, is all one.

Fifthly, Jesus Christ is precious to believers, because he is their righteousness and holiness.

Sixthly, Jesus Christ is precious to believers, because he is their portion: he is the terror of his enemies, and the portion of his people.

I might in a few particulars anatomize the believer, and begin with his head, and shew you, all

that he knows of the things of God he is beholden to Christ for it ; saith Paul, “ God who hath shined in our hearts, by the light of the gospel, in the face of Christ.” All the knowledge of God, all gospel-light, all the knowledge of spiritual things, we have all from Christ. If we consider the believer in his heart, if we find there a broken heart, a tender heart, a good and honest heart, a new-covenant heart ; how comes he by this ? why, he hath it only from him in whom the new-covenant is made, and that is Christ. Consider the believer in his graces, as faith, and love, and patience, and humility, and the rest ; he hath all from Christ, John i. 6. “ Of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace.” There is not one grace but we have it from Christ. Consider him in his life, he is an honest and just man. Who made him to differ ? Why is he not so full of cheating tricks as other men ? Why, he hath not so learned Christ : Christ teacheth him to live at a more holy rate than others do : so that if the believer be better than others in this, he may say, Thanks be to Christ, for that before I lived as vainly as others did ; but now I have not so learned Christ. Consider the believer in his privileges ; he is the son of God, and it is by the Son of God that he is the son of God, John i. 12. “ To as many as received him gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.” So that if he be the son of God, he must thank Christ for it ; if he be one of the family royal,

one of the chosen generation, he must thank Christ for it ; for it is in him, and by him alone that we have all the good which we enjoy. Consider him in his comforts ; he hath not one good day, but it is from Christ : hath he comfort in ordinances, in the society of saints and prayer ? He must thank Christ for all this.

And thus I have given you a brief anatomy of the Christian, and shewed you that Christ is all in all ; whatever he is worth, he is beholden to Christ for it.

Now put all this together, and see what great reason there is that Christ should be precious to believers : and is it any wonder that these souls be enamoured so with him, that they think their lives not worth the living but for him, and in him, and for his sake. Oh sirs, there is very great reason why believers set so high a value and esteem upon Christ, who is their all in all.

Application. The *first* use shall be for examination and self-trial. You have heard that Christ is precious, precious to God, to angels, to saints : But now, O soul, is he precious to thy soul ? if he be precious to you, then all which is precious to him is precious to you.

Oh, that men would but deal truly with their own souls ! many talk of grace, but few taste of grace ; every one doth not walk like a Christian, that talks like a Christian ; many know what is to be done, but never do what is to be done : many

wear Christ's livery, and do the devil's drudgery, many have hands as white as wool, and their hearts as black as hell; many think themselves as surely going to heaven, as if they were already dwelling in heaven; many think it shall go well with them hereafter, because it is so well with them here; many lie down with such hopes in their beds of rest, which they dare not lie down withal in their beds of dust; many appear righteous, who are only righteous in their appearance: but such as deceive others with a false show of holiness, will deceive themselves with a false show of happiness. Remember, Christians, that the sheep's coat shall be taken off the wolf's back. If there be nothing done by your souls in heaven, there will be nothing done for your souls on earth; there is no making out our salvation, but by working out our salvation.

God binds up none in the bundle of life, but such who are the heirs of life; there is no living a life that is not virtuous, and then dying a death that is righteous. Oh! therefore, examine yourselves. I shall propose four questions to be resolved by your own hearts.

1. What interest have you in him? 2. What influences have you from him? 3. What affections bear you to him? 4. What preparations make you for him?

Oh, Christians, that you would consider well these weighty things! Tell me, oh soul, what did

Judas get by his deceitful dealings? Nothing but a halter, in which his body was hanged; and a fire, in which his soul was burned. Though the earth may keep a wicked man living, yet heaven will not take a wicked man dying. I say, therefore, examine yourselves.

Secondly, I shall speak a little by way of exhortation and conclude.

1st, If Jesus Christ be so precious, oh then, open the door of your affections to him, that he may open the door of salvation to you; open to the God of glory, that he may make you glorious. Behold the God of heaven stands at the door of your hearts, and knocks, Rev. iii. 20. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." He knocks by his word, by his rod, by his Spirit, by his mercies, by his judgments, by his comforts; and all is, that he may come in and sup with you. Now, sinners, will you not open the door of your hearts to Christ, that he may open the door of heaven to you? If you shut out Christ out of your hearts, he will shut you out of heaven; and what will you get by that: Oh, sirs, he hath gold to enrich you, wine to cheer you, bread to nourish you, righteousness to justify you, mercy to save you, happiness to crown you.

2ndly, Let all that which is precious to God be precious to you. 1. The Son of God. 2. The book of God. 3. The day of God. 4. The ordinances of

God. 5. The ministers of God. 6. The people of God.

Oh! let these be precious to you: the people of God are very precious to you: a saint is as glorious in his greatest misery, as a sinner is miserable in his greatest glory. The Lord give a blessing to what has been delivered.



WONDERFUL.

CANT. v. 16. *He is altogether lovely.*

DOCTRINE,—*That JESUS CHRIST is infinitely and superlatively lovely.*

TO be in a state of grace, is to be miserable no more, is to be happy for ever. It is faith that unites Christ and sanctified souls together on earth; and love that unites God and glorified souls together in heaven. Oh! believers, you are those worthies of whom the world is not worthy; Jesus Christ from one saint hath more glory given to him, than he receiveth from all the world besides. We owe not only our service to Christ, but we owe also ourselves to him.

I shall now make some entrance upon our Lord Jesus Christ's seventh famous title, which is *Wonderful*. This is one of Jesus Christ's lovely titles in Isa. ix. 6. "He shall be called Wonderful." The

point that we shall lay down and speak to from hence, is this,

Doct. That a believer's Saviour is a Wonderful Saviour.

He is Wonderful in the eyes of all angels and saints for love. The world and devils, for fear, wonder at him.

For the opening of this excellent point, take these particulars—1. Christ is Wonderful in his nature. 2. He is Wonderful in his person. 3. He is Wonderful in his incarnation. 4. He is Wonderful in his saints. 5. He is Wonderful in his offices. 6. He is Wonderful in his miracles that he wrought. 7. He is Wonderful in his humiliation. 8. He is Wonderful in his conquest. 9. He is Wonderful in his ascension. 10. He is Wonderful in his exaltation. 11. He is Wonderful in his working towards his saints. Lastly, He is Wonderful in his coming to judgment.

Some have more time than matter, but I have now more matter than time; therefore I must omit much precious matter, for want of precious time. Beloved, I will handle but one of these particulars, and that is the seventh.

That Jesus Christ is Wonderful in humiliation.

This is the head we shall now insist upon, and indeed this is one of the greatest wonders of all; that he that was so high should be brought so low; that he that was so rich should become so poor; that the Lord of life should die, and the great God

become a babe, and the Eternal Word not able to speak a word ; that he that made the law should be under the law ; that he that was more excellent than all the angels should become less and lower than the angels. Oh ! ye angels, how stand ye amazed at this, that the Lord of heaven and earth should become a Servant to his own servants ! Phil. ii. 17. “ He took upon him the form of a servant.” This must needs be wonderful to all the angels in heaven.

But to proceed. *First*, Jesus Christ took upon him our nature, Heb. ii. 16. God could stoop no lower than to become man, and man could be advanced no higher than to be united to God. He that before made man a soul after the image of God, now made himself a body after the image of man ; for to be like to God is a wonder, but for God to be like man is a greater wonder : but when was it that Jesus Christ took upon him our nature ? When it was in innocency, free from all misery and calamity ? No ; but when it was at the lowest after the fall, when it was most beggarly, most wretched, most bloody, most accursed, most sinful, most feeble. “ When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly,” saith the apostle. Rom. v. 6.

Now, my brethren, that Jesus Christ should take upon him our condition, our frailty, our curse, our nature, when it was thus low, thus poor, thus wretched : oh ! this a wonder of wonders, and yet thus you see did Jesus Christ. Oh, wonderful

abasement ! must God take upon him our frailty ! Had we so far run upon the score of vengeance, that none could satisfy but God himself ? Could he not send his angels or saints, but must he come himself in person ? No, no ; angels or saints could not do it ; but if Christ will save us, he himself must come and die for us.

Secondly, Our Saviour's humility descended very low.

1st, He was born of a poor maid, of no account or reputation. Was there never a great lady or gentlewoman in Jerusalem, for this great Prince of heaven and earth to be born of, but that he must be born of a poor despised virgin ? Yes, certainly, there were gentlewomen in store in Jerusalem, but our Lord Jesus Christ regarded not the rich more than the poor.

2ndly, He was revealed to poor shepherds, not to emperors and kings, not to rulers and great men, not to doctors and learned men, not to Cæsar at Rome. I say, the angels did not go and declare these joyful tidings and good news to Cæsar at Rome, but to poor shepherds in the fields, Luke ii. 8.

3rdly, He was born in a stable, Luke ii. 12. Not in a fair house or palace, not in a parlour or chamber ; no, but in a stable where horses and beasts are fed.

4thly, He was wrapt up in clouts, and laid in a manger ; they were no clouts of fine linen or silks,

no clothes of silver or gold, nor precious robes, but poor and mean like to beggars' rags. Now, beloved, put all this together, and tell me what is more wonderful than this? Oh! humility, humility, how great is thy riches that are thus commended to us! thou pleasest men, delightest angels, and confoundest devils, and bringest the Creator to a manger. Oh, sweet Jesus, thou conquerest death by dying!

Thirdly, The third wonder in Christ's humiliation is this, he became poor. That he that was so rich became so poor; that he that was Lord of all, had nothing at all; he that made heaven and earth had no habitation of his own; he that gives crowns of victory of life, of glory to others, had no crowns himself here, but a crown of thorns: the foxes and the fowls had more than Jesus Christ; Matth. viii. 20. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath no where to lay his head." The foxes had holes to lay their heads in, but Christ hath not a place to lay his head on. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in another man's tomb. "You know," saith the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet he became poor;" 2 Cor. viii. 9. "Yet he became poor!" ay, poor indeed, and so poor that he had not a penny. You will say, that a man is very poor that hath not a penny; truly such an one was Christ; he had not a penny to pay tribute till he got it out

of a fish, Matth. xvii. 27. And when ne was to ride in pomp to Jerusalem, he had no coach, no chariot, no horse or beast of his own ; he was fain to ride upon another man's ass, Matth. xxi. 2. Oh ! ye blessed saints, admire and wonder at this ; is not he the brightness of God, the paradise of angels, the beauty of heaven, the Redeemer of man, the destroyer of death, the King of saints ! And that he should become so poor for us ! oh ! this is wonderful to angels and men.

Fourthly, The fourth wonder in Christ's humiliation is this, that he shed his blood six times for poor sinners ; and this is a great wonder.

1st. The first time was, when he was circumcised at eight days old. Oh, what a blessed Jesus is this ! What, ready for the sacrifice already ? What, but eight days old, and shed his blood for the salvation of men's poor souls !

2ndly. The second time was, when he was in his agony when he was in the garden. Matthew tells us, that his soul began to be sorrowful. Sore amazed, (saith Mark) Mark xiv. To be troubled, (saith John) John xii. " Now my soul is troubled ;—what shall I say ?—save me from this hour." Troubled, O Lord, what ! thou that bindest up the proud waves of the sea, turnest the hearts of kings as rivers of waters ; thou that laigest the foundations of the earth, and spreadest the heavens as a curtain ; thou that guidest the stars and thunderest in the clouds ; thou that upholdest all things by

the word of thy power ; and what, thou troubled ? Oh, the horror, the terror, the sorrow that seized upon the soul of Christ ! saith Luke, he began to be in agony, Luke xxii. 44. “ He began to be in agony, and he sweat.” What ? no natural sweat, but blood, he was in a bloody sweat all over, he swate clots of blood, as the original hath it.

Oh ! how did Christ come swimming to us in blood, and have not we a tear to shed for all these streams of his. We did eat the sour grapes, and his teeth were set on edge ; we climbed the tree, and stole the forbidden fruit, and he went up the ladder of the cross, and died : Oh ! how lovely should he be in our eyes ? We should wear his cross in our hearts, and treasure it up as Moses did the manna in the pot. Christ’s cross, saith he, is the golden key that lets us into paradise, and the angel with the flaming sword is turned out. His red blood washed away our sins.

But, *3rdly*, He shed his blood for us when his cheeks were nipt and torn : the pulling off the hair, as the prophet speaks, Isa. l. 6. “ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that pulled off the hair.” Some are of opinion, that Christ’s cheeks were rent to his very chin, and his beard was pulled off : both were very likely to be true : neither of them could be without much blood : for we find that the soldiers did blindfold him, and then smote him on the face, and bade him read who it was that smote ; they made sport of it,

L C E XXII 41.



CHRIST'S AGONY.

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Luke xxii. 64. Oh how was that face of his lacerated and covered with blood, that was brighter than the sun ! He that was fairer than the sons of men ; he that is the great glittering and sparkling diamond of the ring of glory ! How was he bespotted and besmeared with blood ! Oh ! ye hard of heart, ye stubborn of heart, and indeed too stubborn are we all, if judgment and the hammer will not break your hearts, let love and mercy do it. Look unto Christ, and say, Hast thou suffered this for me, and shall I not love thee, O Lord ! and serve thee, and obey thee, and honour thee ! So say, and so do, and the Lord say, Amen.

But then, *4thly*, Christ shed his blood when the crown of prickling thorns was put upon his head ; **Matth. xxvii.** Some of the fathers say, that he received 73 wounds in his head ; certainly there could not but much blood come out : oh ! what a sight was this to behold that head of his, that was as the most fine gold, as the spouse expresseth it to be, now covered with thorns, and rent with thorns ; that he should wear the prickly crown of sharp thorns, that was fit to wear the crown of glory !

5thly, A fifth time when he shed his blood was when his hands and feet were nailed to the cross ; these beautiful feet of his that came skipping upon the mountains, bringing the glad tidings of peace and salvation ; skipping, saith Gregory, from the throne to the cradle, from the cradle to the cross, and from the cross to the throne again. How

were these blessed hands of his nailed and made fast to the cross ! Oh, ye blessed spirits, look down from heaven, and you may see even the Almighty kneel at the feet of men. Oh, ye angels ! how should ye be amazed at this, to see your Lord and master so far deny himself, as to take upon him the form of a servant ! “ We saw Jesus (saith the apostle,) made a little lower than the angels.” To suffer death, the Creator not only became a creature, but inferior to some of the creatures which he had made. Oh, ye blessed saints ! Why do ye not wonder at this wonder ? to see the beauty of heaven, the paradise of angels, the brightness of his Father’s glory, the Redeemer of man, thus to humble and take upon him man’s nature, for the salvation of man’s soul.

6thly, and *Lastly*, Christ shed his blood when the spear was thrust into his side, out of which presently gushed water and blood ; John xix. 34, Some say, that the soldier that pierced Christ with a spear was a blind man, but our Saviour’s blood sprinkling out upon his eyes restored him to his sight, and he became a convert, a preacher, a martyr. You will say a very strange cure, that the physician should bleed, and his blood should have the virtue, that we should all be saved. Physicians be usually liberal of other men’s blood, but sparing of their own ; but it is not so with our Physician ; instead of the patient’s bleeding in the arm, he bled in the side : why dost thou shower

down thy blood, and come swimming in thy blood ? Is not a drop sufficient ? One drop, saith Luther, is more worth than heaven and earth. Oh love without measure ! Oh wonderful redemption ! That God should take upon him man's frailty, that is wonderful indeed ! It is enough for a king to pardon a thief, but that the king himself should die for the malefactor, that is beyond expression ! This did our blessed Lord, our blessed Saviour : he died that we might live : he went and suffered in his agony, that he might " stay us with flagons, and comfort us with apples : " he endured the greatest pain that we might enjoy the greatest pleasures. Oh how lovely, how lovely was Christ in his sufferings ! " Who would not love thee, thou King of saints ? " Christian consider how much thy dear Lord and Saviour hath suffered and undergone for thee. Oh precious blood, it redeems us, it cleanseth us, it washeth us, it justifieth us, it sanctifieth us, it restoreth us to God, and bringeth us to heaven.

Fifthly, Another wonder in Christ's humiliation is this, He suffered in his soul, Matth. xxvi. 38. " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," saith Christ. Oh what a word was this for a God to speak ! to say, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ! " For a man to say so is no wonder, but for God to say so, oh, this is a great wonder indeed ! The suffering of his soul was the soul of sufferings : Christ yielded his soul for our souls, his soul in our souls' stead.

Many of the faithful servants have suffered much in their bodies, as the martyrs that were racked, and burnt, and sawn asunder : but they had much freedom in their souls, their souls were full of much spiritual joy and comfort. But now Jesus Christ did not only suffer in his body, but in his soul : and that is it which makes the wonder the greater, that Christ suffered in his soul. He drank the cup of affliction, that we might drink the cup of consolation ; he tasted death for us, that we might taste life through him ; he was forsaken, that we might never be forsaken.

A *Sixth* wonder in Christ's humiliation is this, that he should suffer himself to be so much mocked ; he was mocked as Sampson was by the Philistines, when his eyes were put out. And truly this is a great wonder,

1. If we consider who Christ was. 2. If we consider who they were that mocked. He was God, the God-man ; they were but dust and ashes.

1. They did spit upon him. 2. They blindfolded him. 3. They crowned him with thorns. 4. They put a reed into his hand, instead of a sceptre. 5. They clothed him with purple garments. 6. They bowed their knees to him in scorn. 7. They saluted him with, Hail, king of the Jews. 8. They made him carry his own cross, on which he was to be hanged ; as malefactors go with halters about their necks to execution, so they made him carry the cross. 9. They reviled him, wagging their heads

10. They crucified him with two thieves, and him in the midst of them, as though he had been the prince of the thieves, the greatest malefactor of them all. 11. They insulted over him in his misery. Thus they never left him till his soul left the world: and all this they did in scorn to him, that they might make his death the more painful and shameful; oh sirs, this is no small wonder, if we consider how Jesus Christ was mocked.

The *Seventh* wonder in the humiliation of Christ was this, he suffered much from his Father; here is a wonder, if you talk of wonders. He did not only suffer from Jews and Gentiles, Scribes and Pharisees, Judas and Pilate, wicked men and devils, but he suffers too from the Father; and this is that which makes the wonder the greater, Isa. liii. 10. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." Mark, one would have thought, if God would spare any, it should have been his Son, his own Son, his beloved Son, his begotten Son, his bosom Son, and yet God spared him not a jot; Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" mark here, God did not spare him, but delivered him up for us. If Jesus Christ will come and take our sins upon him, God will not spare him, but let out the fulness of justice, and justice to the full upon him, till he had paid the uttermost farthing of justice. Oh! blessed Jesus, didst thou undergo so much for our sinning, for our offending, for our rebellion.

Oh! then, what infinite cause have we to love thee, and obey thee, and honour thee! For the more he hath done and suffered for us, the dearer he ought to be unto us.

Eighthly, The last wonder that I shall mention is this, Christ foresaw all this, and yet he willingly undertook it, to save mankind: he knew before he came from heaven, how his countrymen the Jews would use him, and that one of his family would betray him; John vi. 64. saith the text, “Jesus knew from the beginning who should betray him;” nothing was in the womb of time, that was not first in the womb of Christ; he knew it from the beginning, saith the text. Now, that our Lord Jesus Christ should foreknow all this most wonderful misery that he endured, yet that he should come freely, willingly, and joyfully from heaven, to die and suffer by and for such poor wretches as we are; here is a wonder to angels and men; Heb. x. 9.

Lo, I come,” saith Christ, “to do thy will, O God.” “Lo, I come,” and what is it he was to do? Why, to suffer for poor man, to redeem poor men. Do you see here, sirs, what great love Christ bore to his people, rather than they should be in hell, and be damned; Jesus Christ would come from heaven and suffer all this for them, though he knew before how he should be used: oh, this is a great wonder, dear Christians! Methinks such a pearl should sparkle in our eyes. We sail to glory, not in the salt seas of our tears, but in the red

sea of Christ's blood. Truly it is wonderful to think how much he did for us, and how little we do for him : the greater his sufferings were, the greater were our sins : the greater his pain was, the greater should our love be to him. I shall make of this point an use of information and exhortation.

Use 1. Is it so, that a believer's Saviour is a wonderful Saviour : Then it informs us of eight things.

First, My first inference is this, that Christ's sufferings, in what he endured from men in his body, and what he suffered from God in his soul, he did not only endure pain in his body, but agony in his soul. Oh, the sea of sufferings, the sea of sorrow, the sea of blood, the sea of tears that our blessed Saviour waded through to come and bring peace to our souls, salvation to our souls, grace and glory to our souls ! He suffered from devils, he suffered in his name, he suffered in his members, he suffered in his body, he suffered in his soul : the cause was our sins, the effect our salvation. If you look through the chronicle of his life, you will find his whole life full of sorrow and misery : he was persecuted, he was tempted, he was reproached, he was falsely accused, he was apprehended, he was betrayed, he was crucified. What shall we say : Shall we say more ? What can be said more ? He was full of sorrow, he took his name from sorrow : our Lord Jesus Christ is called a man of sorrows, Isa. liii. 3. " A man of sorrow, and acquainted with

grief." Now judge sirs, whether Christ's life was not full of sorrows, he took his name from sorrow. Oh ! sweet Jesus, thy sufferings were great. This is my first inference.

Secondly, Jesus Christ suffered by himself. He was alone in his sufferings ; neither angels nor saints bore any part with him in his sufferings ; no, he drank the bitter cup alone : he alone purged our sins : Heb. i. 3. " He alone, by himself," saith the text, " purged our sins." No, Christ had none to help to bear his heavy burden with him, he bore it himself alone. But, my beloved, though our Lord Jesus Christ suffered by himself, yet he did not suffer for himself : he suffered for us, he suffered for that which we deserved ; Isa. liii. 4, 5. " He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Do you see here, Christians, how many *ours* are here ? Our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions, our iniquities, our peace ; you have here five *ours*. So again, " For our sakes he became poor ;" 2 Cor. viii. 9. Mark, for our sakes. Beloved, he was born for us, " Unto us a child is born ;" he was given for us, " to us a son is given," Isa. ix. 6. " He was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. ; the text tells, he was made a curse, but it was for us ; he was delivered up for us, Rom. viii. " Who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

us all." Oh, sirs ! all these things were for us, given for us, made a curse for us, made sin for us, delivered up for us, and is now in heaven interceding for us, Heb. vii. 25. So that, my brethren, all that our Lord Jesus suffered, it was not for himself, but it was for us : our blessed Saviour suffered for us, that we might not suffer. This is the second inference.

Thirdly, My third is, That this is more for Christ to suffer any thing, than for all men and angels to suffer all things. Pray mark, sirs, if all the kings and emperors should have left their thrones, their crowns, their kingdoms, their sceptres, their glory, their honours and princely robes, and have come and took upon them a poor Lazarus's condition to go on poorly, and fare hardly, and die shamefully ; why, all this had not been so much as for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to suffer the least thing he did suffer. Now further, I say, if all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, had come and suffered, and died ten thousand deaths, it had not been so much, put all this together, as it was for Christ to suffer any thing : because they are creatures, he is the Creator ; they the servants, he the Master ; they are subjects, he the Prince ; they are mean, he is Mighty ; he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords : " He thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6. Now, I say, it would not have been half such a wonder, if all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, had come and suffered, as

it was for the Son of God. Oh! this is a wonder of wonders; his sufferings were wonderful, his humility was wonderful, his patience was wonderful, his love was wonderful; greater love could no man shew; he loved us so that he died for love. Now, I beseech you, consider this inference, which was this, That it is more for Jesus Christ to suffer any thing, than for all men and angels to suffer all things. And indeed, sirs, let me tell you, I want words to express it, or set it forth; for there is both want of words and want in words to express this matter.

Fourthly, My fourth inference is this, In what miserable case lay we, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ must endure all this, bear all this, undergo all this, for poor sinners! In what a miserable case lay we in, think you? Certainly the misery of man was very great, that man should need such redemption as this: Oh! what a breach had sin made between God and us, that the Son of God must come from heaven to earth to suffer all this? Oh! sirs, mischievous sin, I say mischievous sin, hath undone us: sin hath robbed every one of six jewels, every one of which jewels are more worth than heaven and earth. Would you know what jewels they be that sin hath robbed us of? I will tell you, and then you will say with me, that we were in a very miserable case.

1. It robs us of the image of God. Was not this a precious jewel, think you? I say it robbed us of

the image of God, and drew in man the devil's picture: Malice is the devil's eye, oppression is the devil's hand, blasphemy is the devil's tongue, and hypocrisy is the devil's cloven foot. 2. Sin robs us of our sonship, and makes us slaves to the devil, slaves to sin, or slaves to the world, and slaves to ourselves; this is another jewel we have lost. 3. It robs us of our friendship with God and makes us enemies to God, and enemies to Christ, enemies to our own souls, and enemies to all that is good. 4. It robs us of our communion and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and makes us strangers and aliens. 5. It robs us of our rights and privileges, of heaven, and heavenly things, and makes us children of wrath and heirs of hell. 6. It robs us of our honour and glory, and makes us vile and miserable; as you may see, Isa. i. 6. "There is no soundness in us; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."

Now, sirs, put all this together, and then see whether or not we are not miserable, and whether we did not need a Saviour to come and deliver us from this misery into which our souls were plunged! Now here is our happiness, Christians, in Christ we have these jewels again that we lost in the old Adam; the glorious image of God, our sonship, our friendship, our fellowship, our privilege, and our glory and honour, we have all again by Jesus Christ. Oh! sirs, man was in a very sad condition,

man had brought himself into a sad condition, our condition was a miserable condition.

A *Fifth* inference is this, Jesus Christ brought life to us, but we brought death to him; a life of grace, a life of comfort, a life of glory; he brought glory to us, but we brought shame to him; he brought riches to us, but we brought poverty to him; he brought joy to us, but we brought sorrow to him, sorrow upon sorrow: we put the crown of thorns upon his head, he put the crown of glory upon our heads. We thought the earth too good for him, and would not let him live here, but put him to death, but he thinks not heaven too good for us; we be ashamed to own him before men, but he is not ashamed to own us before his Father, and his holy angels; we condemn him, but he justifies us. Oh! sirs, think of your unkindness to him, and let the considerations of his infinite love and favour to you draw out your affections after him. That is the fifth.

My *Sixth* inference is this, All believers have exceeding great cause to bless God for Jesus Christ: God the Father gave him to us, who were not his friends, but enemies: to us, who were not sons, but slaves: to us, who were not angels but men: to us, who loved not God, but hated him: Oh! have we not cause to bless God for Jesus Christ? In John iii. 6. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

lieveth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Oh, sirs, what a gift is Jesus Christ!

Seventhly, If Jesus Christ be so wonderful, oh, then, how vile a thing, how base a thing is it for the hearts of men to prefer any thing before Jesus Christ? I beseech you, and beg of you all to mind this inference. Surely, sirs, if Jesus Christ be so wonderful, so precious, so lovely, so rich, so sweet, so rare; oh then it is a most abominable thing, a wicked thing, a vile thing to prefer any thing before Jesus Christ. Oh! I may speak it with grief of heart, there be too many in the world that set light by him, and make nothing of him, and love him not, and prefer every base lust before him: though there is nothing more cursed than this, there is nothing more common than this, Christians, for men to prefer the vilest things before Christ.

1st, The wicked worldling, he prefers the trash of the world before Jesus Christ, he can leave hearing and praying, reading and fasting, to follow the world: he prefers gold before God, earth before heaven, gain before glory, his corruptible silver before his Saviour. Oh, thou wicked worldling, thou wretched worldling, can thy riches save thy soul? Let me ask thee, Can thy riches deliver thee from hell? Can thy riches bring thee to heaven, that thou preferrest them before Christ? Oh! the Lord Jesus will come in flames of fire, to take vengeance on such, and then thou wilt know to

thy cost, and pain, and torment, that thy riches cannot keep thee out of hell, much less bring thy soul to heaven: then thou wilt see thy folly when it is too late.

2ndly, Drunkards, wicked drunkards, prefer their drunkenness before Christ; the drunkard prefers his pots before him, the drunkard wades through a sea of drink to his grave; he can sit a day or a whole night in the ale-house, and think it a little time: but an hour in the service of God, oh now tedious is that! Oh! thou drunkard, that thou turnest off thy cups so fast, God Almighty has a cup for thee, but not a cup of sack, or a cup of beer, but a cup of wrath, which thou shalt drink to eternity? which is worse than to drink scalding hot lead down thy throat: he hath so much liquor here, not only drink to quench his thirst, but to drink to excess, till he say and do he knows not what; in hell he shall have little enough, there is never a tavern or ale-house there; no, there is not a drop of water to be got all hell over. Oh, thou wretch! thou shalt live in burning flames, and thy tongue shall cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and if thou wouldst give a thousand worlds for one drop of water, thou shalt not have it. And therefore, I beseech you, if any such there are here, in the name of God, hear and fear, and do no more wickedly. Oh! I would not be in thy condition for ten thousand worlds; and yet I cannot have but bowels of pity towards thee, which constrains me thus to

speaking, knowing thy condition better than thou dost thyself. Oh! couldst thou but speak with thy fellow-drunkards that are now in hell, oh what a dreadful story would they tell thee of their burning, and suffering, and pain, and torments; some are in hell already for the same sins you live in; and if you live and die without Christ, you shall be ere long with them.

3rdly, The swearer, the blasphemous swearer, prefers his oath before Christ. Many can swear by their Creator and Maker, and speak proudly, and look highly, and walk contemptuously, as if there were no God to punish, no devil to torment. Well, let me tell thee, oh thou swearer! that now delightest in cursing, thou shalt be ere long sent with a curse to a cursed place; "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting flames," will Christ say to such persons.

Lastly, The proud person prefers his pride before Christ: if a fine suit of clothes did lie on the one hand, and Christ on the other, the proud would rather put on the suit of clothes than him. Oh, I beseech you, sirs, consider what a vile and abominable thing it is, to prefer any thing before Christ! "Consider this," saith the Psalmist, "ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you." Oh, poor wretch! consider of that text. Thou liest open to all the judgments in this life, and to all the torments in the life which is

to come, all ye wicked ones that prefer any thing before Christ.

Eighthly, The last inference is this—If Jesus Christ be so wonderful, oh then every one that heareth of him should think it is a most dreadful thing to miss of him.

Oh, Christians and friends! consider of it; certainly that man or woman's condition must needs be sad indeed, that lives and dies without Jesus Christ. Oh, poor wretch! the devil looks but for a look from God to come and rent thee to pieces, and draw thy soul to hell. Poor soul, thy soul is in danger every hour of being arrested by death, and carried prisoner to hell. Oh, sirs, I beseech you, do you think and consider with yourselves, what a sad thing it is to miss of Christ. Until a man is in him, he hath nothing, he knows nothing, he enjoys nothing, can do nothing, and is fit for nothing, and is worth nothing, Prov. x. 20.

Oh, I beseech, you, that you would consider seriously that of all miseries that is the greatest of miseries to miss of Christ; we are never able to lament the loss of the poor soul that loseth Jesus Christ: all losses be wrapt up in that one loss. And therefore I beseech you all, both good and bad, bethink with yourselves what a sad condition that person is in that misseth of Christ. So much for this use of information.

BELIEVER'S GOLDEN CHAIN.

I COME now to the *second use*, and that is a use of exhortation; and here I shall make a Golden Chain of twelve links for believers to wear about their necks.

1. Hear the best men. 2. Read the best books.
3. Keep the best company.

1. Hear the best men. Oh, sirs, hear a soul-enriching minister, a soul-winning minister, and soul-searching minister, one that declareth the whole counsel of God, and gives the Father his due, the Son his due, the Holy Ghost his due; one that maketh hard things easy, and dark things plain. Many there are, I may speak with grief and to their shame, who, instead of making hard things easy to the people, make easy things hard to the people, plain things dark, speaking in an unknown tongue, which the people understand not: and all to work a vain admiration of them in the ignorant: but how unlike to Christ, and the prophets and the apostles, these are, I will leave you to judge.

This is as if a man would make a scaffold as high as a steeple, when his work is done upon the ground. Ministers are fishermen; now, you know if fishermen should wind their nets together, they

would catch nothing ; but if they would catch the fish, they must spread their net. The application is easy—A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue ; a heart full of grace is better than a head full of notions ; notional knowledge, it may make a man's head giddy, but it will never make a man's heart holy ; that which most tickleth delicate ears least helpeth diseased spirits : how are we to speak to God and live, much less to speak from God and to the people, that they may live ? How holy had they need to be that draw near to a holy God ! Ministers are called angels, because we should be as angels in our lives ; but if angels fall, they turn devils. Oh ! we should be holy as the holy angels.

It is the foolishness of preaching that saves souls, but not foolish preaching ! Christ taught them as they were able to hear it, and as they were able to bear it, Mark iv. 33. Paul was excellent at this, “ I had rather speak five words in a known tongue, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue.” A man may be a great scholar, and yet a great sinner. Judas the traitor was Judas the preacher : and therefore, sirs, let me beseech you, for your poor souls' sake, hear these ministers that come nearest to Christ, the prophets, and the apostles. He is the best preacher that does the most good, and wins the most souls. You may go from men to truth, but not from truth to men : for the best of men are but men at the best.

2. Read the best books, for in them you will find

the best things ; and compare what is spoken in the books of men, with what is written in the book of God.

3. Keep the best company ; be much with them that are much with God : walk with them that walk with God. “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,” 1 John i. 3. Forsake all bad company, and join thyself with good company ; let them be thy choicest companions, that have made Christ their choicest companion ; lay them nearest your hearts, who lie nearest his heart ; carry them in your bosom by love, who shall be carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom : let Christ’s love be your love ; with whom shall believers be, but with believers ? You know what our English proverb is, Birds of a feather will flock together. Acts iv. 14. “ Being let go they went to their own company.” Indeed none are fit company for a believer, but a believer ; to see a saint and a sinner associating one with another, is to see the living and the dead keep house together : carnal men, though they be naturally alive, yet they are spiritually dead, it is better to be with Lazarus, though in rags, than to be with Dives, though in his robes. “ He that walketh with the wise shall be wise,” Prov. xiii. 20. Oh dwell where God dwells, make them your companions on earth, who shall be your companions in heaven. This is the first.

II. Meditate often, think often on the four last

things: death, which is most certain; judgment, which is most strict; hell, which is most doleful; heaven, which is most delightful.

I. Meditate upon death, which is most certain; "It is appointed to men once to die," Heb. ix. 26. Out of the dust was man formed, into the dust shall man be turned. To think of death is a death to some men; but, beloved, meditate upon death; the meditation of death will put sin to death: death to the wicked is the end of all comfort, and the beginning of all misery; but death to the godly is the outlet to sin and sorrow, and an inlet to peace and happiness; the saints' enjoyment shall be incomparable, when the sinners' torments shall be intolerable: when a believer's soul goeth out of his own bosom, it goeth into Abraham's bosom; when a believer dies, he leaves all his bad behind him, and carries his good with him: when a sinner dies, he carries his bad with him, and leaves his good behind him; the one goeth from evil to good, the other from good to evil. When a saint leaves the world, his flesh returns to the dust, and his spirit returns to rest; when a sinner leaves this world, his body goes to worms to be consumed, and his soul goes to flames to be tormented; the one goes to Abraham's bosom, the other to Beelzebub's bosom; the chaff to the fire, and the wheat to the barn. Oh! for the Lord's sake, meditate upon death. When you come into the world, you do but live to die again; when you go out of the

world, you do but die to live again; he that lives well, cannot die ill; he that is assured of a life that hath no end, cares not how soon his life is at an end; but he that lives without fear, shall die without hope; he that hath no grace in his life, shall have no true peace in his death: an old sinner is nearer to his second death, than he is to his second birth; his body is nearer to corruption, than his soul is to salvation. Death levelleth the highest mountains with the lowest valleys: the robes of princes and the rags of beggars are both laid up together in the wardrobe of the grave. The reason why men so little prepare for death is, because they think so little of death; when they feel sin arresting them, then they fear death approaching. The grave is a bed to rest in, but not a shop to trade in. When the soul at death takes its flight from his loving mate, they shall meet no more till the general assize. When you are putting off your clothes, think of the putting off your tabernacles; be going to your beds, as if you were going to your graves, and close your eyes in one world, as if you would open them in another world; when you are creeping between the sheets, then think of your winding-sheets. Remember, Christians, that God can as easily turn you into the dust as he could take you out of the dust: to-day is your living day, to-morrow may be your dying day. The meditation of death will prepare you for death.

2. Meditate upon judgment. which is most strict ,

“ We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” They who will not come before his mercy-seat, shall be forced to come before his judgment-seat; they who will not hear his word, shall feel his sword; they who are graceless in this day, will be speechless in that day; do you mind me, sirs, at the world’s end; such will be at their wits’ end, to see the earth flaming, the heavens melting, the stars falling, the graves opening, the judgment hastening, the sun and moon mourning, and Christ and his angels coming; he that comes to raise the dead, will also come to judge the dead. Oh! sirs, the great day to great sinners will be a terrible day, when they shall see Christ coming in the clouds, who hath the person of a man, but the power of God, being crowned with dignity, and guarded with angels, and enraged with anger, and enabled with power, to bring all kings and nobles, high and low, rich and poor, to the bar; and there he will judge them, not by the whiteness of their countenances, but by the blackness of their consciences. He that was guarded to the cross with a band of soldiers, shall be guarded to the bench with a guard of angels. You that make no account of his coming, how do you think to give an account at his coming? For the Lord’s sake, meditate upon judgment; the meditation of judgment, sirs, may make you judgment proof: they who now judge themselves in their own private sessions, shall not be judged by Christ at his public assize.

3. Meditate upon hell, which is most doleful : oh sirs, heaven is a place where all is joyful, and hell is a place where all is doleful ; in the former there is nothing but happiness, and in the latter there is nothing but heaviness, Psal. ix. 17. “The wicked shall be turned into hell.” Mark, sirs, the wicked shall be turned into hell. Oh, dreadful place where the devil is the jailor, hell is the prison, damnation is the punishment, eternity is the time, brimstone the fire, and men and spirits the fuel ; to endure this will be intolerable, to avoid it will be impossible. This is the day of God’s long-suffering, that will be the day of man’s long-suffering, there they may suffer, and suffer pain without ease, and torment without end, sorrow without succour, and misery without mercy. For the Lord’s sake meditate upon hell : oh, what hells are there in hell ! the loss of God, the loss of Christ, the loss of all good ; and endless, ceaseless, and remediless torments must be their portion. Oh, that you would but often think of hell ; if once thou droppest into hell, after a thousand years you will be as far from coming out as you were at your first entrance in. There is a way to keep a man out of hell, but no way to get a man out of hell. The wheat and the chaff they may both grow together, but they shall not both lie together : in hell there shall not be a saint among those that are terrified ; and in heaven there shall not be a sinner among those that are glorified. The sea of damnation

shall not be sweetened with a drop of compassion. Will you pity a body that is going to the block, and wilt thou not pity a body that is going to the pit? What a sad visitation is that, where the black horse of death goeth before, and the red horse of wrath followeth after! Oh, that must needs be sad when one death comes upon the back of another. A man's condition in this life may be honourable, and yet his state as to another life may be damnable; poor Lazarus goes to heaven, when rich Dives goes to hell. It is better to go to heaven poorly than it is to go to hell richly. Oh, sirs! let us go to heaven by contemplation, that we may never go to hell by condemnation.

4. Meditate on heaven, which is most joyful, Matt. xxv. 34. "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Heaven is a place where all joy is enjoyed, mirth without sadness, light without darkness, sweetness without bitterness, life without death, rest without labour, plenty without poverty. Oh, what joy entereth into a believer, when he enters into the joy of his master! Who would not work for glory with the greatest diligence, and wait for glory with the greatest patience? Oh, what glories are there in glory. thrones of glory, crowns of glory, vessels of glory, a weight of glory, a kingdom of glory; here Christ puts his grace upon his spouse, but there he puts his glory upon his spouse; in heaven the crown is made for them, and in heaven the crown

shall be worn by them ; in this life believers have some good things, but the rest and best are reserved for the life to come. Oh, sirs ! meditate upon heaven, for meditation of heaven will make us heavenly : heaven is not only a possession promised, but a possession purchased ; when our contemplations and conversation are in heaven, then we enjoy heaven upon earth ; to be in Christ is heaven below, and to be with him is heaven above : there cannot be a better thing for us, than for us to be with the best of beings. “ To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Phil. i. 21. Paul was contented to stay a while out of heaven, that he might bring other souls into heaven ; his life to them was most useful, but his death to him was most gainful. Let our condition be never so great, it is hell without him ; and let our condition be never so bad, it is heaven with him ; I had rather be in hell with Christ, than in heaven without him, saith Luther. Indeed hell itself would be heaven if God were in it, and heaven would be hell if God were from it. That which makes heaven so full of joy is, that it is above all fear ; and that which makes hell so full of horror is, that it is below all hope. The vessels of grace shall swim in the ocean of glory ; here all the earth is not enough for one man, but there one heaven is enough for all men ; a believer shall see with an eye that is purified, what he shall shortly see with an eye that is glorified ; we may talk of the greatness of our crowns, but we shall never

know the weight of our crowns till they be set on our heads. This is the second.

III. Set the watch of your lives by "the Sun of righteousness," Mal. iv. 2.

Live in print, and keep the copy of your lives from blots and blurs, that the characters thereof may be read by all, and bring up the bottom of your lives to the top of your lights. Then only doth the watch of your lives move with uprightness, when it is set by the beams of the Sun of righteousness. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" Tit. ii. 11, 12.

They who will not submit to grace's teaching, shall never enjoy grace's salvation. Oh, live so that the word which hath brought salvation to your souls, may bring your souls into salvation; that you may be such jewels of grace, as shall be locked up in the cabinet of glory. The Father of light takes no pleasure in the children of darkness: "Let your light so shine before men," Matth. v. 16. We must shine in grace before we can shine in glory. They who look for a heaven made ready, should live as if they were in heaven already.

There are four things that make a new creature: 1. Light. 2. Life. 3. Holiness. And, 4. Good works. The children of light must put on the armour of light.

I cannot but sadly reflect on the inconstancy of rotten professors. An applauded Christ shall have many hosannas, but a condemned Christ shall have many crucifiers; but a true believer can as well go with Christ to the tree where he is to be crucified, as he can go with him to the throne where he is to be glorified. Oh, how unanswerable are the lives of some professors to the light of professors! they know much, but do little; they know the good they are to do, but they do not the thing they know; they speak of things above, but they love and follow after things below. A man is not what he saith, but is what he doeth; to say what we do, and not to do what we say, is but to undo ourselves by doing. Take heed, sirs, that you do not take yourselves to hell with heavenly words. What is the great prejudice that the world hath against professors but this, that they who profess against pride more than others, are themselves as proud as others; they profess against covetousness more than others, but are themselves as covetous as others; they often meet together to be better, but they are never the better for their often meeting together? Do but take away their profession, and you take away their religion; they have nothing of the shape but the skin; they are better in their outside than they are in their inside.

Oh, sirs, if ungodliness be evil, why do ye so much profess it? and if goodness be good, why do ye so little practise it? Either take Christ in your

lives, or cast him out of your lips : either obey his commandments more, else call him Lord no more ; either get oil in your lamps, or cast away your lamps. To be a professor of Deity and a practiser of iniquity, is an abomination unto the Lord. Some would not seem evil, and yet would be so ; others would be good, and yet would not seem so ; either be what thou seemest, or else be what thou beest. There are many that blush to confess their sins, that did never blush to commit their sins. There is nothing done in vain, but what is vainly done. Oh, Christians, bring your lights to the light. What darkness can obscure them who have a sun above them ? Believers, when their candles are put out, they can fetch light from the Sun of righteousness. The nearer you are to such a sun, the clearer will be your light. Oh, Christians, you are never the better of your lights, if you are not made better by your lights ; he that sins against his light, will at last sin away his light. If thy light do not put sin and the world under thy feet, it will never put a crown of glory upon thy head. This is the third.

IV. Be willing to want what God is not willing to give.

As God hath never the less for the mercies he giveth, so he hath never more for the duty he getteth : man is such a debtor to God, that he can never pay his due to God ; we are so far from paying the utmost farthing, that at the utmost we

have not a farthing to pay : there is no man but hath received more good than he deserveth, and done more evil than he hath suffered : therefore he should be contented though he enjoy but little good, and not discontented though he suffer much evil. “ Let us therefore be contented,” 1 Tim. vi. 8. A Christian is to submit to the will of God’s disposing, as well as to the will of God’s commanding ; that man obtains his will of God, who submits his will to God : a gracious heart shall never be out of heart, because he hath said, “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” Heb. xiii. 5. He that hath said, will not unsay it : therefore take up your contentment in God’s appointment. We are not to be troubled for this, that we have no more from God ; but we are to be troubled for this, that we do no more for God : a Christian though he hath a will of his own, yet it becometh not a Christian to do his own will : contentment without the world, is better than the world without contentment. Christian, get a holy heart, and thy estate on earth shall be transcendent ; yea, thy estate on earth shall be sufficient : Christian, is not God willing to give thee riches ? Oh, then be thou willing to want riches. Is not God willing to give thee health ? Oh, then be thou willing to want health. Is not God willing to give thee children ? Oh, then be thou willing to want children. Is not God willing to give thee thy desire of this thing or that thing ? Oh, then be thou willing to want that

thing. We many times stand in our own light. Never were any saints their own carvers, but before they had done they cut their own fingers : Lot, you know, was put to his own choice, and he chose Sodom ; but you know it fell out, it was not long before Sodom was burnt. So Rachel said, " Give me children, else I die : " and she had a child, but it cost her her life. Abraham desired the life of Ishmael, but he had little comfort of him all his days. Therefore, dear Christians, submit thy will to God's will ; that soul shall have his will of God that desires nothing but what God wills : do but take care of all that which belongs to God, and God will take care of all that which belongs to you.

It is nothing but reason that God should fall out with them in the course of his providence, that fall off from him in the course of their obedience. Wicked men make the world their treasure, and God makes the world their torment : when they want estates, they are troubled for them ; and when they have estates they are troubled with them. Murmuring persons think every thing too much that is done by them, and every thing too little that is done for them : God is as far from pleasing them with his mercy, as they are from pleasing him with their duty. It is unthankfulness that is the cause of the earth's unfruitfulness. Did a man believe that the Lord would not fail his body, how carefully would he look after his soul ! it is only the Christian man that is the contented man : he

doth not quarrel with God for mercies denied, but blesseth God for mercies bestowed. The higher a Christian is raised above the things of the earth, the more is he ravished with the joys of heaven. That is the fourth.

V. Crucify your sins, that have crucified your Saviour, "They that are Christ's," saith St. Paul, "have crucified the flesh, with the lusts thereof." Did the rocks rent when Christ died for our sins, and shall not our hearts rent that have lived in our sins? Oh, the nails that pierced his hands should now pierce our hearts, they should wound themselves with their sorrows, who have wounded him with their sins! that they have grieved his Spirit, it should grieve their spirits. Oh, that ever I should be so bad a child to him, that hath been so good a father to me! Our sins have been our greatest terror, and our Saviour hath been our choicest helper.

Oh! put sin to death that was the cause of Christ's death; if one should kill our father, would we hug him and embrace him as our friend, let him eat at our table, and not rather hate and detest the very sight of him; if a snake should sting thy dearly beloved spouse to death, wouldst thou preserve it alive, warm it at the fire, hug it in thy bosom, and not rather stab it with a thousand wounds? And were not our sins the cause and instrument of Christ's death? Were not they the whips that scourged him, the nails, the cords, the

spear, the thorns that wounded him, and fetched the heart-blood from him? and can we love our sins that killed our Saviour? Can a spouse love her husband, and her heart embrace an adulterer? We complain of the sins of Judas, and of the Jews, and seem to hate them, and spit at their mention; and can we love our Judas sins, that set them all on work and put Christ to death? and yet how many are there that had rather have sinful-self satisfied, than to have sinful-self crucified. Oh, sin is that mark at which all the arrows of vengeance are shot. Were it not for sin, death had never had a beginning, and were it not for death, sin would never have had an ending. Man began to be sorrowful, when he began to be sinful. The wind of our lusts blowed out the candle of our lives. If a man had nothing to do with sin, death had nothing to do with man.

Oh, did sin bring sorrow into the world? Oh, then let sorrow carry sin out of the world. Of all evils sin is the great evil, Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." Oh, it is worse than punishment, banishment, and imprisonment: sin killeth both body and soul, it throws the body into cold earth rotting, and the soul into the hot hell burning. Oh, for the Lord's sake, think on this, and weep for this betimes: let the cry of your prayers, out-cry the cry of your sins.

Nothing can quench the fire that sin hath kindled but the water which repentance hath

caused. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from our sins ; 1 John i. 11. A saint is not free from sin, that is his burden : a saint is not free to sin, that is his joying ; sin is in his soul, that is his lamentation : his soul is not in sin, that is his consolation. If you will not sin in your grief, then grieve for your sins. This is the fifth.

VI. Do you bless God most who are most blessed : God is good to all, but to Israel he is truly good, even to such as are of a clean heart ; Psal. lxxiii. 1. They can never speak enough of God, who have tasted the goodness of God. It is but reason that they should bless most, who are most blest.

They who hold the largest farms must pay the greatest rents : differing mercies calleth for differing duties. It is very meet that he should be magnified by us, that makes us meet to be glorified with him. Oh, Christians, if he hath called you out of your marvellous darkness into his marvellous light, you ought to shew forth his marvellous praise, 1 Pet. ii. 9. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Men should not glory in what they have received, but they should give glory for what they have received ; the glory of God must be the golden butts at which all the arrows of duty

are shot : grace in our hearts is like stars in heaven, that shineth not by their own splendour, but by the borrowed beams from the Sun of righteousness. " Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12.

As the best of means should make us fruitful, so the best of mercies should make us thankful. Shall a saint find God a master that is bountiful, and shall God find a saint a servant that is undutiful? If he gives us any enjoyment it is but for his own entertainment. He shall never want mercy, that doth not play the wanton with mercy. To bless God for mercies, is the way to increase them ; to bless God for miseries, is the way to remove them ; no good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved ; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured. Oh, Christians, give all your glory unto him, who hath given all his glory unto you ; and do as these glorified ones do in glory. " The four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive all glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and are created," Rev. iv. 10, 11. All you have is derived from God, let all you have be turned to God : the more God's hand is enlarged in the blessing of us, the more our

hearts should be enlarged in the blessing of God. Oh, believers! he hath frowned upon others, but he hath smiled upon you; he hath passed by others' doors, and knocked at your doors; he hath made you light, when others are dark; he hath made you live, when others are dead; he hath made you heirs of glory, when others are the children of wrath: he hath made you sons, when others are slaves; he hath made you higher than the angels, when others are no better than devils: this hath he done, and more, for you who are believers. Now, have you not great cause to bless God? Whilst man is a-blessing of God for his mercies, God is a-blessing of man with his mercies. Can you find me out that good that is not given you, or that evil that is not forgiven you? God deserves more from every Christian than he demands from every Christian: where the Sun of mercy shines the hottest, there the fruits of grace should grow fairest. That is the sixth.

VII. Fear not the fear of men.

Wicked men must not be feared though they be ever so mighty, nor followed though ever so many: "Fear not them that kill can the body," saith our blessed Saviour, "and can do no more," Matt. x. 28. If a righteous cause bringeth us into suffering, a righteous God will bring us out of suffering: if we suffer for well-doing, we do well in suffering; shall we cease to be professors, because others will not cease to be persecutors: if ye suffer for well-

doing, saith the scripture, ye are happy. What, are ye members of Christ, and yet afraid to be martyrs for him? What, are the children of God afraid of the children of the devil? Are the children of light afraid of the children of darkness? Are the children of heaven afraid of the children of wrath? What though you be weak, your King is strong! What though you be lambs among wolves, your Captain is the lion of the tribe of Judah! What though you have no power, Christ hath all the power given him both in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 8. The fear of persecution is more than persecution; he that loseth a base life for Christ, shall find a better life in Christ; persecution, though it brings death in one hand, it brings life in the other; though it kills the body, it crowns the soul; it sends the body to the dust, and the spirit to rest; the worst they can do against you, is the best they can do for you; the worst they can do is but to send you out of earth, and the best they can do for you is to send you up to heaven; they take a life from you, which you cannot keep, and bestow a life upon you which you cannot lose. If they be blessed who die in the Lord, oh, how blessed are they that die for him! Do wicked men glory in that which is their shame, and shall we be ashamed of that which is our glory! It is an honour to be dishonoured for Christ. What is a short happiness attended with everlasting misery, to a short misery attended with everlasting happiness? Oh how clear will the Sun

of righteousness shine, when these dark clouds are blown over ! What if they threaten you with present death, doth not God threaten you with everlasting death, if you be not ruled by him, whose threatening should you fear ? Is man more terrible than God ? Is death more dreadful than hell : God hath said, " Fear not man ? who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the sons of men that shall be made as the grass ? " Isa. li. 12. Do you see, Christians, God would not have you to be afraid of men : he that is afraid of man is afraid of grass ; " Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness," Isa. xli. 10. Let but professors do their best, and let the world do their worst. That is the seventh.

VIII. Cleave thou closest to that truth which is the choicest.

First, Be thou hearing and doing both, but for doing more ; he that doth most shall receive most : Christians, the more glory you bring to God, the more glory you shall have from God. Oh, how abundant shall they be in the work of the Lord, that know their labour is not vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Secondly, Be for knowledge and practice both, but for practice more. Alas ! what is it to be a Christian no farther than a few good words will

go? I tell you, sirs, good words without good works will never turn to a good account; holy sayings without holy doings will never conduct your souls to a holy place.

Thirdly, Be for gifts and graces both, but for graces more. A heart sanctified is better than a tongue silvered. Grace brings Christ and thy soul together, and unites them together. Without grace there may be a knowledge that is seeming, but without grace there can be no knowledge that is saving.

Fourthly, Be for credit and conscience both, out for conscience more. Where there is a pure conscience, there will be a pure conversation. As no flattery can heal a bad conscience, so no cruelty can hurt a good conscience.

Fifthly, Be good in good times, and in bad too, but in bad more. To be good at all times is a Christian's duty; but to be good in bad times is a Christian's glory. You cannot tread in the steps of our Saviour, but you will taste of the cup of our Saviour. "Any man," saith the apostle, "that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution."

Sixthly, Be for body and soul both, but for soul more. Oh, how careful are men for their bodies, but how careless for their souls! They are true to the part which is without, but false to that part within. So they may have but something of the world in their hands, they care not though they

have nothing of heaven in their hearts. Oh, Christians! our work below is then the best done when our work above is first done. The greatest happiness of the creature is, not to have the creature for one's happiness.

Seventhly, Be for peace and truth, but for truth more. Oh, Christians! love the truth in truth; love the truth of God in truth; justify the truth, and the truth will justify you. Till you can love the naked truth, you will never love to go naked for the truth. Remember that, I pray, Christians.

Eighthly, Be for life and Christ both, but for Christ more. Christ is sweeter than wine, better than life: he that came from above is above all: he that hath the key of heaven, can only open the door of heaven.

Ninthly, Be for works and faith too, but for faith more. Faith is a grace that is the most needful, and grace that is the most faithful: a faith that worketh not, is a faith that saveth not; nothing will get up to heaven, Christians, but that which came down from heaven.

Tenthly, Be for public duties and private too, but for private more. Be much in private duties; if you fall short in any, fall short in public duties, and be most in private: you that have filled the book of God with your sins, shall fill the bottle of God with your tears.

Eleventhly, Be for form and power both, but for power more; I say but for power more. Christians,

alas ! what is form without the power ? They give God the cup and knee, and give up themselves to all manner of abominable wickedness. Oh, Christians, I say be for power, be sure you look to that, that ye be for the power of godliness more than the form of godliness.

Twelfthly, Seek to please men and God both, but rather God: to be in favour with them who are out of favour with God, to be well spoken of by them who are evil spoken of by God, is rather a reproach than an honour. If there be no fellowship between Christ and you in holiness, there will be no society between him and you in holiness. This is the eighth.

IX. Acquaint yourselves with yourselves.

The trial of yourselves is the ready road to the knowledge of yourselves. No man begins to be good till he sees himself to be bad ; till you see how foul your faces are, you will never pay tribute to Christ for washing them ; he can never truly relish the sweetness of God's mercies, who never tasted the bitterness of his own misery. The bottom of our disease lieth here, that we search not our disease to the bottom. He that trusteth in his heart is a fool, and yet such fools are we that trust our hearts. The conversation may be civilized, when the affections are not sanctified. A man may be acquainted with the grace of truth, who never knew the truth of grace. Therefore examine yourselves, and prove yourselves, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

“whether ye be in the faith or no;” or whether the faith be in you or no; whether your hearts be the cabinet of such a jewel: for want of this many are like travellers skilled in other countries, but ignorant of their own. Many have their evidences of grace to seek, where they should have their evidences of grace to show. Oh, beloved, I beseech you with beseeching, be more in searching of your own hearts; it is of a greater concernment to know the state of your hearts, than to know the state of all your estates. A man may profess like a saint, pray like a saint, speak like a saint, look like a saint, and yet not be a saint. You cannot always tell what o’clock it is in a man’s breast by the dial of his countenance; the humblest look is sometimes linked to the proudest heart.

Believers, for the Lord’s sake, consider well of these three things. 1. What you were in the state of nature. 2. What you are in the state of grace. 3. What you shall be in the state of glory.

Oh! methinks you should think of this, what you were, are, and what you shall be. Conversion becometh in consideration. Grace, as it makes our comforts sweeter, so it makes our crown greater. Beloved, for God’s sake, for your soul’s sake, acquaint yourselves with yourselves; the readiest way to know whether or not you are in Christ, is to know whether or not Christ be in you; for the fruit is more visible than the root. The tree of righteousness is known by the fruits of righteous-

ness : Matth. vii. 20. "The tree is known by its fruit," said our Lord Jesus Christ ; if you would know the heart of your sins, you must then know the sin of your heart. Will you remember that Christians ? "For out of the heart," saith our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts, murder, adultery, and fornication, and blasphemy," Matth. xv. 19. Many have passed the rocks of gross sins, that have been cast away upon the sands of self-righteousness ; if you be found in your righteousness, you will be lost in your righteousness ; he that hath no better righteousness than what is of his own providing, shall meet with no bigger happiness than what is of his own deserving. That is the ninth.

X. Do good in the world, with the goods of the world.

It is better spending your time in doing good, than in getting goods ; for the goods we get we must leave, but the good we do will never leave us, Rev. xiv. 13. "They shall rest from their labour, and their works follow them." The ambitious man, shall leave all his greatness behind him, when the religious man shall carry all his good with him. Dives' charity was very cold, and he found the flames of hell very hot.

There is not a drop of water for such Diveses in hell, that have not a crumb of bread for such Lazaruses on earth : Dives denied Lazarus a crumb of bread, and therefore Lazarus must not bring him a drop of water : he that will shew no mercy,

shall have no mercy shewed him. Let charity be your shop to trade in, and eternity shall be your bed to rest in : be a father to all in charity, and a servant to all in humility : do much good and make but little noise. Every grace that is more exercised shall be more glorified : the more good ye do for God, the more good ye shall receive from God ; as the poor cannot live without your mercy on earth, so without God's mercy you shall not live in heaven. He that gives to the poor saints for Christ's sake, shall be rewarded by Christ for the saints' sake ; Matth. xxv. 36—40. " I was naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, " Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The more ye disburse for Christ on earth, the greater sums of glory you shall receive from Christ in heaven. The crop that is sown in mercy, shall be reaped in glory.

As we must lay all out in the cause of God, so we must lay down all for the cause of God. That which is cast into Christ's treasure by the way, is

not cast away: mercy is so good a servant, that it will never let its master die a beggar; though it make your pockets lighter, yet it will make your crowns greater. Oh, that God should give the rich so much! and, oh, that the rich should give the poor so little! Some say that the barrenest ground is nearest to the richest mines; it is too true in a spiritual sense. How many rich men, though their estates be like a fruitful paradise, yet their hearts are like a barren wilderness! They have much of the earth in their hands, but nothing of heaven in their hearts: they are rich in goods, but not in goodness. I wonder that such worldlings do not tremble at these sayings: Matth. xxv. 41—46. “Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athrist, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, and in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” Oh, that men should be so much taken up with

their riches, who must ere long be taken from their riches! As you brought none of your coin into the world with you, so you shall carry none of it out of the world with you! in the world you find it, and in the world you shall leave it, to whom you know not, it may be to them you would not. Did but some rich men know before their death, how their gold and silver should be spent after their death, they would wish it back again at the mines from whence it came. Oh, ye rich men, I say unto you, do good in the world with the goods of the world: it is a greater honour to give like a prince, than live like a prince: it is better to have a heart, and not wherewith, than to have wherewith, and not have a heart. "Give, and it shall be given thee;" your charity should seek the poor, before the poor should seek your charity; he that sheweth mercy when it may best be spared, shall receive mercy when it shall be most needed. That is the tenth.

XI. Improve that time which will be yours but for a time; time ere long shall be to you time no longer, Rev. x. 6.

Opportunities are for eternity, but opportunities are not to eternity. Christians, remember that that race is short in which you run, but the prize is great for which you run. As you have not a lease of your lives, so you have not a brace of lives. Had we not need to take heed how we shoot, that have but a single arrow to direct to the mark? No time is ours but what is present, and that is as soon past

as present: nature's womb often proves nature's tomb.

Oh! consider how much of your time is gone, and yet how little of your work is done. Shall your rest steal away one half of your time, and your lust the other? Oh, what enemies are they to themselves, that of all their days allow themselves not one! Your work is great and your time is short; you have a God to honour, a Christ to be believed in, and a soul to save; you have a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, and a heaven to make sure: you have many strong corruptions to weaken, and many weak graces to strengthen: you have many temptations to withstand, and many afflictions to bear: you have many mercies to improve, and many duties to perform: therefore endeavour to improve your time. All the time God allows us, is little enough to perform the task which he allots us: therefore, dear Christians, redeem the time, Eph. v. 16. "Redeem the time, because the days are evil." If much of your time be past, let no more of your time be waste: how much the longer our time hath been, the shorter our time shall be. Oh! that every step our souls take might be towards heaven: and that you would make sure of God to-day, because next day you are not sure of yourselves. For the Lord's sake, improve your time; for your soul's sake, redeem the time. The lawyer will not lose his term, the waterman will not lose his tide, the tradesman will not lose his

exchange time, the husbandman will not lose his season, and will you lose your precious season? If you lose your season, you lose your soul. Know that there is but one heaven, and miss of that, where will you take up your lodging but in hell: There is no fitting up under ground, for those that have lost their time above ground; the great hinderance of well-living, is the expectation of long-living: many think not of living any better, till they think of not living any longer. Oh, how just is it that they should miss of heaven at the last! Now is the time of grace to accept of you, and now is the time for you to accept of grace. To-day, to-day, to-day, saith God, thrice in one chapter, Heb. iv. 8. To day, in the 7th verse, to day, in the 13th verse, to-day, in the 15th verse. Oh, but sinners say, To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow. Alas! sirs, one to-day, is better than two to-morrows: this day is thy living day, to-morrow may be thy dying day; and therefore, for the Lord's sake, put it not off. Now if ever, now for ever, now or never, up and be doing, lest you be for ever undone. This is the eleventh.

XII. Learn humility from Christ's humrility: "Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls," Matth. xi. 9.

Humility makes a man like an angel, and for want of it angels were made devils; proud sinners be fit companions for none but proud devils: the

most lovely professor, is the most lowly professor. A believer is like a vessel in the sea, the more it fills the more it sinks: none live so humble on earth as those that live highest in heaven: do but see how one of the best of saints looks upon himself as one of the least of saints, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints," said the great Paul, Eph. iii. 8. The most holy men be always the most lowly men: where humility is the corner-stone, there piety is the top-stone. It is good to have true thoughts of ourselves. The cloth of humility should always be worn on the back of Christianity.

God Almighty hath two houses in which he dwells, his city-house, and his country-house; his city-house is the heaven of heavens, and his country-house is the humble and lowly heart, Isa. lvii. 15. "I dwell in the high and holy place," that is, in heaven, God's city-house; and "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit," that is his country-house; humility is a Bethel for God's dwelling-place, pride is a Babel of the devil's building. If you do not keep pride out of your soul, and your soul out of pride, pride will keep your soul out of heaven. I will not say a poor man is never proud, but I will say a proud man is never good. God resisteth the proud, James iv. 16. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The face of prosperity shineth brightest through the mask of humility: of all garments humility best becomes Christians, and best adorns their profes-

sion. God will not endure that any man should think well of himself but himself. A Christian should look with one eye upon grace, to keep him thankful, and with the other eye upon himself, to keep him mournful. When you begin to grow proud of your glistering feathers, look down upon your black feet. Rev. iv. 10. "The four and twenty elders fell down before the throne, and cast down their crowns before him that sat on the throne." The only way of keeping our crowns on our heads, is the casting them down at his feet. Alas! sirs, what are ye proud of? Are ye proud of your riches, of your honours, of your relations, or beauty, or strength, or life? Alas! alas! these are poor low things to glory in: When men glory in their pride, God stains the pride of their glory. Oh, go to the graves of those that are gone before you, and there see, are not their bones scattered, their eyes wasted, their flesh consumed, their mouth corrupted? Where now be these ruddy lips, lovely cheeks, fluent tongue, sparkling eyes, comely nose, are they not all gone as a dream? And where will you be ere long? And will you be proud of these things? An humble heart knoweth no fountain but God's grace, and an upright man knoweth no end but God's glory. That is the twelfth.

XIII. Be upright Christians.

The gospel doth not only require that we should be excellent Christians, but that we should be dili-

gent Christians. The more glorious dispensations you live under, the more gracious conversation you should have. Spiritual actions will make you look fresh in the eyes of spiritual Christians. The more you have of God in you, the more you shall have of good with you. The clearer the lamp of grace burns on earth, the clearer the Sun of glory shall shine in heaven: We live by dying to ourselves, and die by living in ourselves. Christians should be burning lamps as well as shining lamps. Should we walk in darkness, whose Father is light? Shall the tongue be found lying continually to men, that was found praying so earnestly to God? or those be found gazing on sinful objects, that were found reading of sacred oracles? Shall such as have received Christ's press-money, fight under Satan's colours? Beloved, either let your works be according to your profession, or else let your profession be according to your works. Never put on thy fair suit of profession, to do thy foul work of corruption: never put on Christ's livery, and do Satan's drudgery. "Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matth. vii. 21, 22. Oh, that men's tongues should be larger than their hands; In words they profess him, but in works they deny him. Many set a crown of glory on the head of

Christ by a good profession, but place a crown of thorns on the head of Christ by an evil conversation. "They feared the Lord, but served their own gods," 2 Kings xvii. 13.

Alas! beloved, what good will your profession do you, if you do not make good your profession? It is better never to shine, than not to be gold; either take oil in your lamps, or throw away your lamps! the almost Christian shall be but almost saved. Therefore my brethren, let me beseech you, be altogether Christians, be right, upright Christians, be sincere Christians, be as godly as the godly holy David tells, Psal. xv. 2, 3, 4. Who is the upright man? Who is the right upright Christian? "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart, he shall dwell in the tabernacle;" and so he goes on. If you would keep yourselves unspotted from the world, you must keep yourselves unspotted in the world. Oh! be not vain in a vain world. The loose walkings of Christians are the reproaches of Christians. Were Abraham now on earth, who is in heaven, how would the father of the faithful blush to see their actions, that stile themselves his offspring? Oh, there be some men who think themselves too good to go to hell, and God thinks them too bad to go to heaven. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, Gen. vi. 9; he was not a sinner among those that were saints; but he was a saint among those that were sinners;

he walked with God when others walked in iniquity; he was a just man like unto God, that there was never another man like unto him.

The primitive Christians were the best of Christians; they knew little, but did much; we know much, but do little. Oh! sirs, if the service of God be bad, why do you set forth in it? Be altogether Christians, or else be not Christians. It is good to profess, but it is better to practise; yea, of the two, practice without profession, is better than profession without practice. We must not be offended at the professors of religion because they are not religious that make a profession. Though there be many professors that are not believers, yet there are no believers but are professors: Christians, when you make a good profession, be sure to make your profession good. This is the thirteenth.

XIV. Let it be thy art in duty, to give God thy heart in duty.

“My son, give me thy heart,” Prov. xxiii. 26. You see God calls for the heart; the heart is that field from which God expects the most plentiful crop of glory: God bears a greater respect to your hearts than he doth to your works: God looks most when men look least: if the heart be for God, then all is for God; our affections, our wills, our desires, our time, our strength, our tears, our alms, our prayers, our estates, our bodies, our souls; for the heart is the fort-royal that commands all the rest: the eye, the ear, the hand, the tongue, the head, the foot;

the heart commands all these. Now, if God hath the heart, he hath all: if he hath not the heart, he hath none: the heart of obedience, is the obedience of the heart; as the body is at the command of the soul that rules it, so should the soul be at the command of God who gave it. 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Ye are bought with a price," saith the apostle, "therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits." He that is all in all for us, would have that which is all in all in us. The heart is the presence-chamber, where the King of Glory takes up his lodging; that which is most worthy in us, should be given to him that is most worthy of us. The body is but the cabinet, the soul is the jewel; the body is but the shell, the soul is the kernel. The soul is the breath of God, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils. The devil knows if there be any good treasure, it is in our hearts; and he would fain have the key of this cabinet, that he might rob us of our jewel—The devil would fain have the key of our hearts. As we commit our estate into the hand of men, so we should commit ourselves into the hands of God. But alas! man hath no mind to give what God hath a mind to have. "This people draw near to me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me," Matth. xv. 8.

Alas! too often have we our hearts to seek when we come to seek God: you may keep your duty to yourselves, if you do not give your heart to him:

a duty that is heartless is a duty that is fruitless ; you can never give God the heart of your service, if you do not give him the heart in your service. The heart should be the first that comes into duty, and the last that goes out of duty : good words without the heart are but flattery, and good works without the heart are but hypocrisy. Beloved, for your poor souls' sake, let words and works go together, your tongue and hearts go together, your lips and lives go together, your prayer and practice go together ; if your duties do not eat out the heart of your sins, your sins will eat out the heart of your duties. A dram of matter is better than a flood of words : a heart without words is better than words without a heart : a little done with the heart is better than a great deal done without the heart. Nothing takes with the heart of God, but what is done with the heart of man. He that regards the heart without any thing, regards not any thing without the heart. That is the fourteenth.

XV. Be diligent in the means, but make not an idol of the means.

“ Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure ;” 2 Pet. i. 10. It is our present business to make sure our future blessedness. When estates, and honours, and life, and friends, and pleasures, cannot be made sure, let this be made sure ; for, you see, by daily experience, they cannot be made sure, 2 Tim. vi. 19. “ Lay up for yourselves a good foundation.” See what the apostle saith, “ Lay up

for yourselves a good foundation." And why? That you may lay hold on eternal life. There is no landing on the shore of felicity, without sailing on the bark of fidelity: Phil. ii. 12. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Till you attain to firm salvation, you will never be free from great temptation: Luke xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Who would not strive for glory with the greatest diligence, and wait for glory? "Pray without ceasing," 1 Thess. v. 17. Pray continually, though you be not continually at praying; our daily bread calls for daily prayers; every day, begin and end the day with God; let prayer be your first work and your last work every day. Oh, Christian, lock up thy heart with prayer, and give God the key. Are you called by the name of Christ, and will not you call upon the name of Christ? Take away spiritual breathings, and you take away spiritual living. We may pray always, and yet not be always at prayer: Christians can never want a praying time, if they do not want a praying frame. None can pray aright, but those that are new creatures; but all ought to pray, because they are creatures. A spiritual man may pray carnally, but a carnal man cannot pray spiritually. Prayer fetcheth an angel out of heaven to fetch Peter out of prison; he prayed heartily and speeds happily. The gift of prayer may have praise from men, but it is the grace of prayer that hath power with God. Prayer, never did man

rightly make it, but God did quickly grant it. No Christian hath so little of Christ, but he hath matter of praising; and no Christian hath so much of Christ, but he hath matter of praying. Deny not God faith in prayer, and God will not deny a faithful prayer. But then, in the *Second* place, As you must be diligent in the means, so make not an idol of means: take up all duties in point of performance, and lay them down in point of dependence. What is hearing without Christ, but like a cabinet without a jewel; or receiving without Christ, but like an empty glass without a cordial? Duty can never have too much of our diligence, nor too little of our confidence. A believer doth not good works to live, but he lives to do good works. It is a bad thing for us to be something in ourselves, and to be nothing in Christ; to undertake all our duties, and yet to overlook all our duties; the righteousness of Christ is so to be magnified, but the righteousness of Christians is not to be mentioned. When you have done all, then say, "We are unprofitable servants." Luke xvii. 10. We owe the life of our souls to the death of our Saviour. Duties are not destroyed by Christ, but they must be denied for Christ. We have as much need of the Spirit to bring up our graces, as we have need of the Spirit to bring forth our graces. The clock of our hearts will stand still, unless he oil the wheels. "Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Good works are so indigent, as none can be saved

by them, and yet they are so excellent as none can be saved without them. Duties, if Christ breathe not in them, a Christian grows not under them. We must live in obedience; many live more upon their customs than they do upon Christ; more upon the prayers they make to God, than upon the God to whom they make their prayers. Duties are but dry pipes in themselves, though never so curiously cut out, till Christ fill them.

XVI. Take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial.

Though all gold glisters, yet all that glisters is not gold; all is not truth which goeth for truth, 1 John v. 1. "Try the spirits, believe not every spirit." Mark, sirs, you must not believe every spirit; but try the spirits whether they be of God or no; 1 Thess. v. 21. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Prove all things, that is, try all things by the scripture. Many hold fast before they try, but we must try before we hold fast. Alas! there are many in the world that are like infants that swallow all down; all that the nurse puts into the poor babe's mouth it swallows down: truly it is so with many men and women, whatever men say, down it goes; they will not take so much pains as to try the sayings of men by the sayings of God. Oh, say they, the men we hear be honest men, able and learned men; but would you not tell money after them? Would you not weigh gold after them? I suppose you would: and will

you take doctrines upon trust without trial? Who will buy a jewel in a case, but a fool? Remember, Christians, that the whore's cup is gold without, but poison within, Rev. xvii. 4. "She had a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness." The cup is of gold, but the poison is the rankest poison; methinks this cup is much cupped about. The learned men be grown so wise, that they have almost made the world fools, 2 Pet. ii. 1. As there were false prophets among the people, so there must be false teachers also among you. And, oh! that there were not too many false teachers in these days. To counterfeit the coin of heaven, is treason against the King of heaven: and if this treason deserved hanging, I know who would be hanged next. I have often thought upon Chrysostom's saying, preaching before a company of ministers; 'I profess,' said he, 'I do not know whether any clergyman, be saved or no,' You will say this is a strange saying of a minister to a company of ministers.—Their calling is so weighty, their temptations so many, and their lives so bad: they speak like angels of light, but they act like angels of darkness. Oh, how desirous are men to draw the fairest gloves upon the foulest hands? Men are better known by what they do, than by what they speak; for they say and do not. Therefore, beloved, believe not their flattering words, nor fair speeches, whereby they deceive the hearts of the poor ignorant people; Rev. xvii. 8. Mark the apostle, "By good words

and fair speeches," said he, "they deceive the heart of the simple." God may reject those as copper, whom men do adore as silver. It is ill dressing ourselves for another world by the looking-glass of this world. The scriptures do not only present to us what God will do for man, but also what man must do for God. What is the reason that there are so many scribbling professors in the world, but because they write after such imperfect copies? The generality of persons, they will rather walk in the way that the most go, than in the way that the best go. Great men's vices are more imitated than poor men's graces; but know, they who follow after others in sinning, are like to follow after others in suffering: we must not walk in the way that hath been gone, but in the way that must be gone. "Be followers of me," saith Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 1. "as I am of Christ." Where he follows Christ, we must follow him; but if Paul forsake Christ, we must forsake Paul. If we will not have the world to be our leaders, we shall be sure to have them to be our troublers; if they cannot seduce us into an evil way, they will oppose us in a good one; if they cannot scorch us with their fire, they will black us with their smoke; speaking evil of you, because you run not the same way of excess of riot; because you will not do evil with them, therefore they will say evil of you. But, sirs, whatever ye do, follow those that follow Christ. Oh, that they

should speak so much of God to others, and act so little for God themselves. Now, beloved, I beseech you, that you would take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial: try their ways, try their doctrines, try their sayings, try their worship, by the word of truth; and if it be according to truth, and agreeable to truth, and bottomed on truth, then believe it, then receive it; if not, reject it, and tread it down as dirt under your feet, let it be who it will that brings it: nay, if an angel from heaven come and preach any other doctrine than the written word declares, let him be accursed; we ought not to receive it, Gal. i. 8. "If an angel from heaven," saith he, "bring any other doctrine than what you have received, let him be accursed;" and therefore, once more, let me beseech you, for the Lord's sake, take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial. It is a vain thing to say it is day, when there is nothing but darkness in the sky. That is the sixteenth.

XVII. Take those reproofs best which you need most.

Be not angry with them who tell you the truth, nor with the truth that is told you, Gal. iv. 16. "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" He can be no true friend to thee that is a friend to thy sins; and thou canst be no friend to thyself if thou art an enemy to him that tells thee of thy sins. Wilt thou like him the worse that would have thee to do better? Psal. cxxxi. 5. "Let

the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil." You see here that the good man is not angry with reproof, but takes it as a kindness; it shall be a kindness, and as an excellent oil. But the serpent, the more he is stirred, the more he gathers up his poison to spit at you. If Amos declare the word of the Lord, the land is not able to bear all his words, Amos vii. 10. If John the Baptist endeavour to take away the life of Herod's sins, Herod will take away the life of John the Baptist; Matth. xiv. 10. John was beheaded. If the prophet go about to impugn the king's sins, he himself shall be imprisoned, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. "The king was wroth with the prophet, and he put him into prison." Jerusalem will stone the prophets till she hath not left one stone upon another. Oh! that men should be so cruel to those that intend their cure. Wicked men cannot endure reproof. You give the physician leave to tell you of any disease that is in your bodies; you give your lawyer leave to shew you any flaw that is in your estates; you give your horse-keepers leave to tell you the surfeit of your horses; and what! must we only flatter you, and dissemble with you, and cry, Peace, peace, till your souls drop into hell? Oh! we cannot, we will not, we must not. "Speak all these words that I have commanded thee, be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before their faces," Jer. i. 17.

Speak to their faces, lest I destroy thee before their faces ; this is the sense of the words. “ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded,” 1 Tim. vi. 17. Great men as well as poor must be admonished ; though they be greater than the ministers in the world, yet they are not greater than he that sent the ministers into the world. But, my brethren, there is a great deal of discretion to be used in reproofing ; many check passion but with passion, and anger with anger ; and this is to lay one devil and raise another ; reproof should not be with passion, but with compassion ; not with jeering, but with grieving ; not with laughing, but with weeping : “ I have told you often and now I tell you weeping,” Phil. iii. 18. The apostle could not make mention of them with dry eyes ; his eyes were wet, because their eyes were dry. It is the part of a good man to reprove, though his reproof be not taken in good part ; it is better to lose the smiles of men than to lose the souls of men. The magistrates, they look to your peace ; the lawyers, they look to your estate ; the physicians look to your bodies, the ministers to your souls. Ministers must draw the sword of reproof against the sons of men, and strike at them, and thrust at them—“ Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,” Eph. v. 11. Rather reprove them : we must not suffer wicked men to walk in the devil’s ways without reproof, we must

reprove you wisely, sincerely, sharply; and when ye mend your lives, we shall mend our language. That is the seventeenth.

XVIII. Labour more for the inward purity, than for the outward felicity.

John vi. 27. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth to everlasting life." That man that is a labouring bee for earthly prosperity, will be but an idle drone for heavenly felicity. Gold in your bags will make you greater, but it is grace in your heart that will make you better. He is a rich man that lives upon his wealth, but he is a righteous man that lives upon his faith. A heavenly conversation is better than an earthly possession: it is a great mercy to have a portion in the world, but to have the world for a portion is a great misery. Our affections were made for things that are above us, and not for the things that are without us. Col. iii. 1, 2. "If ye are risen with Christ." Pray mark! what then? "Seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." The things of this life have not the promise of godliness, but godliness hath the promise of the things of this life. Inward piety is the best friend to outward felicity, though outward felicity be many times the worst enemy to inward piety: the ways of iniquity are the ways of beggary. Do you make heaven your throne to serve it, and God

will make the earth your foot-stool to serve you : inward piety is the ready road to outward plenty ; 1 Tim. iv. 8. " Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Oh what an excellent jewel is godliness ! and who would not part with all for godliness ? Who would not account all other things but dung and dirt to gain godliness ? But, alas ! some men are so in love with their golden bags, that they will ride post to hell if they be paid well for their pains : they look upon gain as the highest godliness, and not upon godliness as the highest gain : they mind the world that is come so much, as if it would never have an ending ; and the world to come so little, as if it would never have a beginning. Any good will serve the turn of those who know not the chief good : the things of this world are all the happiness of the men of this world ; Job. xxi. 15. " What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? or what profit shall we have if we pray unto him ?" Oh, what wretched worldlings we are here ! Oh, what pains do men take to cover the flesh from nakedness, when their spirits are not clothed with the robes of righteousness ?

They are diligent about what is temporal, but negligent about what is spiritual ; they are careful about dying vanities, but slothful about durable excellencies ; they feast their bodies, but starve their souls ; they lay up treasures on earth, but none in heaven. Oh ! why do you spend your

money? I say, Why, O beloved, "why do you spend your money for that which is not bread? and why do ye labour for that which satisfieth not?" Read the text, Isa. lv. 2. Riches have made good men worse, but they never made any bad man better: usually the poorest on earth are the richest in heaven. If riches would free from hell, oh then how few rich men would be damned. He that knocks at the creature's door will find but an empty house kept there. Oh, beloved, what is darkness to light? What is gold to grace? What is earth to heaven? that you thus neglect the great things, the weighty things, the only things, and busy yourselves about toys and trifles, when you have a crown to look after, a heaven to look after, a kingdom to look after.

I beseech you, beloved, labour more for inward holiness, than for outward happiness; more for the seed of grace, than for the bag of gold; more for inward piety, than for outward plenty; more for an heavenly conversation, than for an earthly possession; the earth is for a saint's passage, but heaven is for a saint's portion. Oh, believer, whilst thou livest, thou wilt find godliness gainful, and when thou diest, thou wilt find godliness needful! That is the eighteenth.

XIX. Live in love, and live in truth.

1 John iii. 18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth." That love is love in deed and in truth. Let

your love, Christians, be sincere, and not selfish. Gal. v. 14. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." How dost thou love thyself? How dearly dost thou love thyself? Why, so you must love your neighbour; 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' He that is not wanting in this duty, is wanting in no duty. It is called an old commandment, and a new commandment: 1 John ii. 7, 8. Love is there called, an old commandment, and a new. It is as old as the law of Moses, and yet as new as the gospel of Jesus Christ. A carnal man may love his friend, but it is a Christian man that loves his enemy. He that loved us when we were enemies, commands us to love our enemies. Matth. v. 44. "Love your enemies," said our Lord, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." A Christian should wish well to them who wish ill to him.

Oh, believers, let me beseech you, let me beg of you for your precious souls' sake, to live in love, and to live in truth. Ye are fellow-labourers, fellow-members, fellow-citizens, fellow-travellers, fellow-sufferers, fellow-heirs, fellow-servants; and will you not love one another? Remember, Christians, he that would not be his brother's keeper, would be his brother's butcher, Gen. iv. 8. We have all the same father, God; the same head, Christ; the same guide, the Spirit; the same attendants, the angels; the same grace, faith; the

same title, son ; the same clothing, Christ's righteousness ; the same glory, heaven. And shall not we be dear to one another ? He that loves himself, will not hate his brother ; for whilst thou art out of charity with thy brother, God is out of charity with thee ; and thou lovest more for want of God's love, than thy brother loses for want of thy love, Heb. xiii. 1. " Let brotherly love continue." Dost thou love the person of Christ, and hate the picture of Christ ? Oh, sirs, remember the God of love hath commanded us to love one another. Beloved, it is a sad thing, and truly so sad, that it may make our very hearts bleed within us, to think that the Lamb's little party, Rev. xiv. 1, 2. who are in strength the weakest, in riches the poorest, in number the fewest : and shall they be in love the coldest, in judgment the most divided ? Is not this sad now, that the little ones of Jesus Christ, that the lambs of Jesus Christ, should love one another no better ? Oh, Christians, either lay your malice aside, or else God will lay you aside, as he hath done to too many of us at this day, to our great sorrow ; while you are with God, he is with you ; and if you seek him, he will be found of you ; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Never man was forsaken of God, till God was forsaken of man ; he sticks close to us, while we stick close to him ; but if we forsake him, he will forsake us. He that will be angry and sin not, must not be angry but with sin.

Therefore, dear Christians, let me beseech you to love one another. Oh, that I could but speak out how much I desire the love of one another! Oh, it will be a happy day when all the people of God are knit together in love, in union and affections! Oh, sirs, if God had desired or commanded some great thing of us, some burthensome thing of us, it might have been excused; but, alas! it is no more but to love our brethren; and shall we deny this? But you may say, How should we believers love one another? I answer,

First, You should highly esteem one another, as pearls in comparison of other men; so doth God. God calls his people his jewels, his treasures, his glory, his portion; when he calls wicked men dogs, vipers, swine, briers, and thorns. You should be very high in one another's affections.

Secondly, You should delight in the company of one another, in the society of each other; God delights in the society of saints, so should you.

Thirdly, You should be ready to help one another, and to do good for one another, and communicate one to another. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive."

Fourthly, Admonish one another; exhort one another, provoke one another to love, and to do good works.

Fifthly, Sympathize one with another; fellow-

members should be fellow-feelers : so did Moses, and Jeremiah, and old Eli, his heart was broken before his neck was broken. Dear Christians, let me beseech you, let me beg of you to love one another : he calls us to love, who is love itself. This is the nineteenth.

XX. Set out for God at your beginning, and hold out with God until your ending. As there are none too old for eternity, so there are none too young for mortality. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," Eccl. xii. 1. We are born to serve God ; and better we had never been born than not serve him. Man is beholden to God for what he hath, but God is not beholden to man for what he doth : it is a greater glory to us that we serve God, than it is to God that we serve him ; it is not he that is made happy by us, but we are made happy by him : he needs not such servants as we are on earth, but we need such a Master as he is in heaven : he will be everlastingly blessed without us, but we shall be everlastingly cursed without him. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 36. It is sad, my beloved, it is sad, that we should live so long in the world, and do so little good ; or that we should live so little in the world, and do so much evil. Oh, you must not think to dance with the devil all day, and sup with Christ at night, to go from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom. If salvation were easy to come by, it would be slightly

set by. There is no obtaining of what is promised, but by fulfilling what is commanded. Neglect not the race of holiness : " Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which none shall see God," Heb. xii. 14. Beloved, there are many young people in the world, who are very wicked in the world ; they walk in darkness, and do the works of darkness ; they are young in years, but old in sin ; they are very vain in a vain world ; they sin with delight, and make sin their delight. I beseech you look in Eccl. xi. 9, " Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee, and walk in the ways of thine own heart." Oh this is brave indeed, if it would always last ; but after the flash of lightning, comes the clap of thunder ; mark what follows, " But know for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment." Do you but see here, sirs. Oh were it not for this *but*, how brave were it for wicked men ! But for all these things God will bring thee into judgment : for all thy wantonness, and for all thy pride, and for all thy profaneness and prodigality, thou shalt be brought to judgment : after all your present receiving, you must be brought to your farther reckoning. Oh, therefore, let nothing be done in this world, which cannot be answered in another world. Let me beseech you who are young men and young women, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth : to serve God, to love God, to honour God, to obey God in your youthful days. The flower

of life is Christ's setting, and shall it be of the devil's plucking? Will you hang the most sparkling jewel of your young years in the devil's ears? Oh! it is hard casting off the devil's yokes, when we have worn them so long about our necks! Oh, young people, if you be sick of the *will not*, old age will die of the *cannot*! if God's to-day be too soon for thy repentance, thy to-morrow will be too late for thy acceptance. You can never come too soon to God, nor stay too long with God: he shall be happy in the end, who is holy to the end; "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. Oh, hold on and hold out to the end: he that draws back from profession, shall be kept back from salvation: he that departs in the faith shall be saved; but he that departs from the faith shall be damned: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. x. 38. "Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; seeing ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. So I say to you all, young and old people; "Be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If he gives that grace that is not due to us, shall we deny that glory that is due to him? If he make our natures gracious, we should make his name glorious. Oh! be still with God, so was David, Psal. cxxxix. 18. "When I awake, I am

still with thee:" David was least alone, when he was most alone: there cannot be a better being for us, than for us to be with God. This is the last.

A
CABINET OF JEWELS,

OR,

A GLIMSE OF SION'S GLORY.

First, Loathe sin, and leave sin.

“**H**E that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy,” Prov. xxviii. 13. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John. i. 9. There must be a falling out with our sins, before there be a falling off from our sins; there must be a loathing of sin in our affections. Oh, is it not a thousand times better to part with sin, though never so sweet, than to part with God, and Christ, and heaven? One of them you must do. One sin will damn a soul out of Christ, but no sin can damn a soul in Christ: sin is the evil of evils; it is worse than the devil; for it was that that made the devil to be a devil. Oh! the love of sin, and the lack of grace, will ruin and destroy our souls for ever. It is better not to be, than to be a sinner: better to be no people, than not to be the Lord’s people. Oh, therefore kill sin, that sin may

not kill you. Mourn for sin, and flee from sin. Do not commit new sins but repent for old sins, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities." Oh, poor soul. hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yea, hast thou not had enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or is it profitable for thee? Oh, what a place will ye be shortly in of joy or torment? Oh, what a sight will ye shortly see in heaven or hell! Oh, what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in, to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in unquenchable fire with devils. Oh, therefore, die unto sin, confess it, mourn for it, and be ashamed of it; hate and loathe it, and flee from it as from a serpent; and though your sins are more than ye can number, yet they are not more than God can pardon.

II. Put off the old man, and put on the new man.

"Lie not one to another, seeing you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 9, 10 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. "For, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may

grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are past away, behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. A new understanding, a new will, new desires, new love, new delights, new thoughts, new words, new company, and a new conversation. He is not what he was before. Oh, dear friends, be new creatures that you may be glorious creatures. We can call nothing in heaven ours, till Christ be ours; without regeneration there is no salvation: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You have heard much of God, Christ, and heaven, with your ears, but this will not bring you to heaven, unless you have much of God, Christ, and heaven in your hearts: you must be able to say, I was once a slave, but now a son; once I was dead, but now I am alive; once I was darkness, but now I am light in the Lord; once I was a child of wrath, an heir of hell, but now I am an heir of heaven; once I was under the spirit of bondage, but now I am under the spirit of adoption. A true believer lives in the Lord, 1 Thess. i. 1. On the Lord, Rom. i. 17. Luke xx. 8. From the Lord, John vi. 57. To the Lord, Rom. xiv. 8. With the Lord, 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

III. Make your peace with the Prince of Peace,

Isa. ix. 6. Psal. ii. 12. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Oh, do not lift your hands against his Son, but kiss the Son.

Let his will be your rule; his Spirit your guide; his precepts your practices; his decrees your delights; his chosen ones your choicest companions. Submit to his gospel and government. Oh, sirs! make your peace with God.

There is a fourfold peace. *First*, There is a peace external; that is, peace with men. *Secondly*, There is a peace supernal; that is, peace with God. *Thirdly*, There is a peace internal; that is, a peace with conscience. *Fourthly*, There is a peace eternal; and that is, peace in heaven, Psal. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

If you have peace with God, the world and the devil cannot hurt you. And upon the glory shall be a defence, Isa. iv. 5. Believers have God for their guide and gain: he that meddles with the saints of God, assaults God himself. Zech. ii. 8. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." He that lifts up his hand against them, lifts up his hand against God: though they have many enemies, yet they have one friend that hath more strength than all their enemies. A ragged saint is dearer to God, than a glittering emperor that wants grace. Oh, make your peace with the

Prince of Peace, that in this life you may have the assurance of eternal life, and that eternal death may not be your portion in the other life.

IV. Make religion your main business, and not a by-business.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall,” 2 Pet. i. 10. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” Phil. ii. 12. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you!” Matth. vi. 33. Oh! why is the glory of this world so much regarded, but because the glory of heaven is so little minded. Oh! what is an earthly kingdom, in comparison of the heavenly kingdom? The angels themselves, though they are glorious spirits, yet they are ministering spirits.

Do not most men of the world make light of God, and of Christ, and the Spirit, and heaven, and their precious souls? “And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen, and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise,” Matth. xxii.

Wretched worldlings make religion a by-business; they will hear, read, and pray, when they have nothing else to do. Oh, that such men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are! would they then do as they do? Oh, that they did but know the worth of their souls, and the want of a Saviour; the shortness of their time, and the greatness of their work! would they then neglect God and their own souls as they do?

Oh, friends, let me beseech you to whom I write, to make religion your main business, hearing, reading, praying, believing, and doing, your main business. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you; for him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27.

V. Do nothing in this world but what you can answer for in another world.

"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," Rom. ii. 16. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or

whether it be evil," Eccl. xii. 14. Oh ! for the Lord's sake, my dear brethren, let nothing be done by you in this world, but what may be answered for in another world.

Many men do that in this world which they cannot answer for in another world: now they condemn God, blaspheme God, rebel against God, go a-whoring from God, and persecute the beloved of God. Instead of protecting the saints, imprison the saints, and are more for crushing them than comforting them; instead of visiting them, vilify them; and instead of affecting them, afflict them, "and eat them up as they eat bread," Psal. xiv. 4. and will not suffer them to worship the true God, in spirit and in truth, but mock them, Heb. xi. 26. Threaten them, Acts iv. 29. Accuse them, Acts xxiv. 5. Slander them, Matth. v. 11. Curse them, Matth. v. 44. Beat them, Acts v. 40. Imprison them, Acts iv. 3. Plunder them, Heb. x. 34. Banish them, Heb. xi. and murder them, Rom. viii. 36. All this the poor innocent suffer, whilst swearing, cursing, whoring, robbing, blasphemy, drunkenness, and gluttony, and all manner of debauchery, yea, murder itself, walks unpunished in the streets, and only he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. What wonder then, if such as these shall one day hide themselves in dens and holes, and "cry to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb?"

Rev. vi. 15, 16. Oh, what will persecutors do, when Jesus Christ will appear “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know him not, and obey not his gospel?” 2 Thess. i. 8. Will not they be dumb and speechless, and have never a word to say for themselves; as that man that had not on the wedding garment? Matth. xxii. 12.

But, oh, beloved, “Let that grace that hath appeared unto all men, teach us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” Tit. ii. 11, 12. following the Lamb, resisting Satan, shunning sin, and separating from the world.

VI. Make the work of God your rule, and the Spirit of God your guide.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,” Isa. viii. 20. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts, 2 Pet. i. 19. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” 2 Tim. iii. 16. “Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come,” John xvi. 13. The scripture is a rule before us, to

shew us where we must go ; the Spirit is a word behind us, to enable us to go according to the direction of that word. The word of God is a compass, by which we must direct our course ; the Spirit is the great pilot, that steers us in this course ; we have no eyes to see the word, till the Spirit enlighten them ; we have no ears to hear the word, till the Spirit open them ; we have no hearts to obey the word, till the Spirit bow and incline them. By the word of God we know the mind of the Spirit ; and by the efficacy of the Spirit we feel the efficacy of the word : the word of God shews us the way ; and the Spirit of God leads us in that way which the word points out. The Spirit of God is able to expound the word of God, and to make it plain to our understanding. The Holy Ghost is the church's interpreter : he gives the scriptures, and he can reveal unto us the sense and meaning of the scriptures : the word is God's counsellor, to discover the path in which we are to walk ; the Spirit is the counsel of God, that teacheth us to walk in that path : the word is a crystal glass, which shews us our duty : if God had not put his Spirit into our hearts, as well as his word into our mouths, we should never have arrived at the fair haven of peace. Augustine calls the scriptures, The Epistle of God to the creatures, by which we understand the very heart of God. God Almighty hath, in the sacred scriptures, as it were, unbowed himself, unfolded all his counsel to the creatures, as

far as is necessary to be known for their direction and guidance to everlasting life.

There be many that walk by false rules. 1. Some by opinions. 2. Some by customs. 3. Some by providence. 4. Some by conscience. 5. Some by their own reason. 6. Some by men's examples. 7. Some by their lusts. But, oh! my dear friends, let me beseech you to walk by none of these false rules, but keep close to the word and Spirit of God.

VII. Be faithful and fruitful.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know your labour is not in vain,” 1 Cor. xv. 58. “Every tree that beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” Christians must be fruitful, and not slothful: see that ye bring forth good fruit, and much fruit.

First, Sincerity, which is not a single grace, but the soul of graces. “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,” Psal. li. 6.

Secondly, Humility is a grace most prevailing with God for the obtaining of all graces. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,” Matth. xi. 29.

Thirdly, Prudence. The patient Christian is the best for waiting, but the prudent Christian is the best for working. “Be ye wise as serpents, and

harmless as doves," Matth. x. 16. We must have innocency with our wisdom, else our wisdom is but craftiness; and we must have wisdom with our innocency, else our innocency is but weakness. We must have the harmlessness of doves, that we may not wrong others; and must have the prudence of the serpent, that others may not abuse and circumvene us: not to wrong the truth by silence, here is the innocence of doves: not to betray ourselves by rashness, here is the wisdom of the serpent.

Fourthly, Patience. Here is the patience of the saints, Rev. xiii. 10. and xiv. 12. The way to bring the world under us, is to be patient under its frowns.

Fifthly, Self-denial. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" Matth. xvi. 24.

Be faithful in your promises, and in your purposes; be faithful to the ways of God, and cause of God. Oh! do not begin with the Lamb, and end with the beast; "but be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. Keep your lights burning, and lamps shining, your loins girded, your consciences awakened, your garments unstained, and your spiritual armour constantly on, and closely girt.

VIII. Have a care of reporting and believing the world's report of the people of God.

Those that have a good conscience, have not al-

ways a good name. The people of God in this life are called by the wicked, The troublers of Israel, seditious, rebellious, and what not; an old device of that old serpent to pursue the troubles of Israel upon Elijah, the chariot of Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 12. 2 Kings ii. 12. Jeremiah for speaking against their sins and wickedness, and denouncing God's judgments against them, is judged worthy of death, Jer. xxvi. 8, 9. So Jer. xxxviii. 4. the wicked nobles petition the king to murder him, under pretence that he sought not the good of the people, but their hurt. So Amos, for speaking against the abominations of the king's court, is charged with treason against the king's person; Amos vii. 10, 13. So Paul and Silas, for preaching up the kingly power of Jesus Christ, are accused by the envious Jews, and rude multitude, as turning the world upside down, and breaking the decrees of Cæsar; yea, Christ himself had this laid to his charge. Mark what the Jews say of him, "And they began to accuse him, saying, We have found this fellow perverting the nations, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ a King," Luke xxiii. 2. Matth. xvii. 24. And for this have the servants of God in all ages been accused and persecuted, killed, and stoned, Matth. xxiii. 37. Acts vii. 52. Now, if they did so to the green tree, no wonder if they do it to the dry: If the Lord and Master was called an enemy to Cæsar, no wonder if those of his household be called so. Our

integrity will not secure us from infamy; the choicest of professors have had black marks in the world's calendar. It is usual for those who live in treason and rebellion against the King of heaven, to slander his servants with treason and rebellion against the kings of the earth.

But, my dear brethren, take heed of this; for as the death of the saints is precious, so the names of the saints are precious in God's account. The world will father a hundred lies upon the Lord's people: "Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;" Matth. v. 11. 1 Pet. iv. 14. Wicked men hate them most that God loves most: but God will roll away the reproaches of his people; he will cause their innocency and righteousness to break forth as the sun at noon-day, and their names shall be in everlasting remembrance. Yea, at that great day, God will clear their innocency before men and angels, and all the world.

IX. Keep in with God; now men are out with you.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works," Psal. lxxiii. 28. "He hat dwelleth under the shadow of the Most High, no plague shall come nigh him."—"He shall give his angels charge over thee," Psal. xci. 10, 11. "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine: though the labour of the olive should fail,

and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and the herd from the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will triumph in the God of my salvation ;” Hab. iii. 17, 18. “ The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runneth into it, and are safe.” James iv. 8. “ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” This is a great comfort to the people of God, though they be as lilies among thorns, and as sheep among wolves, that they have a God to go to. “ Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,” Isa. xxvi. 20. Let the world frown, and friends forsake you, God can sweeten all your enjoyments : keep in God’s way, and you will be sure of God’s protection : do you keep God’s precepts, and God will keep your persons ; do what God commands, and avoid what God forbids, and then you need not fear what man can do unto you. If you would have God to take care of you, you must cast your care upon God ; wait on him, and walk with him, obey his precepts, and believe his promises.

Oh ! beloved, let wicked men fall out with us, and hate us, and reproach us, as much as they will, they cannot hurt us, if we keep in with God : therefore, my beloved, above all things get communion with God, and keep communion with God ; communion with God will yield you two heavens, a heaven upon earth, and a heaven after death.

All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave the earth ; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are on the earth. He enjoys nothing that wants communion with God.

X. Live above the love of life, and the fear of death. “ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it,” Matth. xvi. 25. “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,” Luke xiv. 26. He that loves Christ more than his life, will be sure to save and keep both ; he that goes out of God’s way to avoid dangers, shall certainly meet with danger. “ Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s,” 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

My dear friends, let us live above sufferings and fears, though we cannot live without sufferings. “ In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,” John xvi. 33. He that loveth Christ above life, will let life go rather than Christ.

Consider, my beloved, Christ and the cloud of witnesses and martyrs that are gone before, and passed over through all these floods, and safely arrived to shore, are now in heaven with God, and Christ, and holy angels, where there is fulness of

joy and pleasures for evermore. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore,” Psal. xvi. 11. Oh! the joy that they enjoy! Oh! the rivers of consolation that flow from God! “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes,” Rev. vii. 15, 16, 17. Who are they that shall have all this honour, and glory, and joy, and blessedness in heaven? For this see verse 14. “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The sweetness of the crown which believers shall receive, will make them amends for the bitterness of the cross which they have carried.

XI. Desire better hearts more than better times.

“O, Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” Jer. iv. 14. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses,

blasphemies," Matth. xv. 19. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9.

Oh! beloved, instead of reforming, we are complaining of wicked men; and of the wickedness of their cruelty, more than our apostasy; of their injuries against us, more than our injuries against God. We pore too much upon second causes, or complain of instruments, not of ourselves. We have been a long time in sinning, and we had need be a long time in repenting: the times had not been so bad, had we not been so bad; the times would soon be better, if we were but better.

Alas! beloved, we have sinned such sins as unrighteous men could not sin; against the clearest light, and dearest love: the better God hath been to us, the worse we have been to him, he hath loaded us with his mercies, and we have wearied him with our sins. Oh! let us blame ourselves more, and the times less; let us turn unto the Lord, that he may turn unto us in love and mercy; let our hearts go out to him, that his heart may come unto us. Oh! beg and cry for better hearts, that you may serve God better; for broken hearts, for sincere hearts; for it is that God looks at, and calls for. Prov. xxiii. 26. "My son, give me thy heart." Our hearts are always out of tune to serve God, but never out of tune to serve sin: for if we had never so good times, and not good hearts, it would rather hurt us than bless us.

XII. Grow downward in humility, and inward in sincerity.

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. iii. 8. “Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted,” Matth. xxiii. 12. “Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,” Col. iii. 12. “Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time,” 1 Pet. v. 5, 6. Bring up your will to God, that he may bring down his will to you: be low in your own eyes, and keep a low esteem of yourselves; abhor pride, and flee from it; be inwardly sincere, as well as outwardly humble: do not look heaven-ward by your profession, and hell-ward by your conversation. “He that lives in sin, is dead in sin,” Eph. ii. 1. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” Eph. vi. 24. Let your hearts be upright with God, and walk as those that have God for their portion: knowing there are many eyes upon you, the eye of God, the eye of Christ, the eye of angels, the eye of saints, the eye of the world, and the devil’s eye upon you too, therefore walk wisely, and sincerely; be like the king’s daughter, all glorious

within, Psa. xlv. 13. "She is all glorious within," though within is not all her glory, "her clothing is of wrought gold." Do you think yourselves good, because others think so? Alas! the best men's confidence of us are poor evidences of heaven: the best testimony is that within us, and above us. See therefore that ye grow in grace, and delight in holiness, bring forth much fruit, and live still as before the living God. Take heed of hyprocrisy and apostasy; make it your daily business to walk with God: be much in the exercise of humility; humility will exceedingly adorn your profession. Do not place religion in a few good words, when the substance is neglected; but live as ye would die; live to-day as if ye were to die to-morrow.

XIII. Do good to those that be good.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to love mercy, and to do justly, and walk humbly with thy God?" Mic. vi. 8. "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 18. "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Heb. xiii. 16. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions," James i. 27. Forget not to contribute to the necessities of the poor saints; think that God hath given you your estates for such a time as this.

Oh ! beloved, what an opportunity have you now to do good, if Satan do not hinder you ' Are there not many of Christ's ministers now in want, and members in want? some in prison, and some out of prison? Remember these that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body, Heb. xiii. 3. There be many men that have a great deal of this world's wealth, and riches, and goods in their hands, and in their houses, but have no grace in their hearts; and therefore they do no good with the goods of this world: they live so unfaithful, that their lives are scarce worth a prayer, and their deaths scarce worth a tear. Men may as well go to hell for not doing good, as for doing evil. He that bears not good fruit, is as well fuel for hell as he that bears bad. You may not be outwardly bad, and yet not inwardly good: you may be as far from grace as from vice: men are not so much sent to hell for doing evil, as for not doing good: " For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," Matth. xxv. 42. The rich glutton was in hell's torments, not for persecuting Lazarus. Meroz was cursed by an angel, not because they fought against the Lord, but because they came not to help the Lord against the mighty, Judg. v. 23. It is one of the greatest mercies in the world, for God to give a man a heart to do good with that he hath given him.

Oh ! beloved, be always doing good, and hating

evil; look not only where you may get good, but where you may do good; labour to be helpful to the souls of others, and supply the wants of others.

XIV. Choose chastisement before defilement.

“Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” Heb. xi. 24, 25. “For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods; knowing in yourselves, that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance;” Heb. x. 34. So the three children chose burning in the fiery furnace, before bowing to the golden image. Dan. iii. 16—18. “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace: and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” So Daniel chose suffering before sinning. And it is said of those in Heb. xi. 35. they accepted not of deliverance; “And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Oh! beloved, there is more evil in the least sin against Christ, than in the greatest suffering for Christ.

1. Our sufferings for Christ are but light, 2 Cor.

iv. 17. 2. But short, but for a moment. 3. Christ stands by us in our sufferings, 4. Our sufferings are ordered by the Father. 5. Our sufferings shall not hurt our souls. 6. God gives us the best of comforts in the worst of times : we have most of consolation from God, when we have most of tribulation from men : as our sufferings do abound, so our consolations do abound : when the burden is heaviest upon the back, then the peace of conscience is sweetest and greatest within. Therefore, my dear brethren, keep yourselves out of the puddle of this world, and from the evil of this world, and if you must sin or suffer, choose suffering before sinning.

XV. Think not the worse of godliness, because it is frowned upon ; nor the better of ungodliness, because it is smiled upon.

“ For bodily exercise profiteth little ; but godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.” 1 Tim. ix. 8. “ Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,” Phil. iii. 8. “ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness : but rather reprove them,” Eph. v. 11. “ For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. vi. 23.

Oh! friends, think not the worse of holiness because it is reproached, and scorned, and persecuted by wicked men and devils; nor the better of wickedness, because wicked men love it, and follow it, and say, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" Mal. iii. 14. But there is a time coming, when ungodly men would be glad of some of that holiness that they now despise; but they shall be as far from obtaining it, as they are now from desiring it. Let us therefore love holiness and hate wickedness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Holiness is the only way to happiness. We must not dress ourselves for another world by the looking-glass of this world. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil," Exod. xxiii. 2. "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction; whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, and who mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 18, 19. The children of God must be harmless in their actings, and blameless in their walkings.

XVI. Prize the word of God by the worth of it, that you may never come to prize the word of God by the want of it.

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea,

sweeter than honey to my mouth," Psal. cxix. 103. "It is sweeter than the honey, and the honey-comb," Psal. ix. 10. "Oh, how do I love thy law!" Psal. cxix. 97. "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver," verse 72. "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" 1 Pet. ii. 2. "Let the word of God dwell richly in you;" not only with you, but in you, Col. iii. 16. Oh! let us, with Job, esteem the word of God above our necessary food, Job xxiii. 12: and with David, above our gold and silver. The delight of a saint in God's word, over-tops all his creature delight: wicked men can delight in the creatures of God, but none in the word of God: they can delight in the gifts of God, but none in the God of gifts. Oh! let us love the word, let us prize the word: it is the sun of the Christian world, as the sun is the light of the natural world; and without it the world is but a chaos, and a dungeon full of darkness; so is the word of God the light of the spiritual world, without which a Christian is in eternal night. Take away the scriptures, and there will be no certain rule to direct men what is to be done, or what is to be believed. All false ways are here discovered, all sins are here forbidden, all holiness is here commanded; here you may see every action and motion of our lives, as a step to life, or a step

to death; and as a step heaven-ward, or a step hell-ward. Oh! therefore prize and obey the word.

1. It is a plain word. 2. It is an uniform word! 3. It is a sure word. 4. It is a powerful word. It is the savour of life unto life, unto them that believe.

Oh, beloved! let us read the word, and abide in the word: "If ye continue in the word, then are ye my disciples;" John viii. 31. Now the less you hear, the more do you read, that little book of the Revelation, and Daniel especially.

XVII. Have a care of the whore of Babylon's golden cup, and sweet wine.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour; and decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls; having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her abominations," Rev. xvii. 4. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth waters as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood," Rev. xii. 15. Let me beseech you to have a care of this, and keep yourselves from this: be like the virgin spouse of Christ, who followeth him wheresoever he goeth.

My dear friends, keep yourselves from four things.

First, From false teachers. The devil hath his ministers as well as Christ. "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: Matth. vii. 15.

“Yea, they are greedy dogs, they can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter,” Isa. lvi. 11. Oh! false teachers do not feed the flock, but fleece the flock; they do not convert, but pervert; they do not season, but poison; they do not edify for salvation, but edify for damnation; instead of curing souls, they kill souls; so they have but the people’s goods, they care not though the devil have their souls; they are neither rightly called, nor rightly qualified, nor rightly ordained: “Their course is evil, and therefore it is not right,” Jer. xiii. 10. They are dogs and wolves combining together to massacre the flock of Christ. Oh! therefore keep yourselves from Babylon’s merchants, that make merchandize of the souls of men, Rev. xviii. 13. Oh! the sins of teachers are the teachers of sin.

Secondly, From false doctrine. “But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you; who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction,” 2 Pet. ii. 1. “Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein,” Heb. xiii. 9.

I beseech you also in the Lord, my brethren,

that you do not carnally comply with, nor superstitiously conform to the inventions of men : but “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free,” Gal. v. 1.

Thirdly, From false worship. “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb :” Rev. xiv. 9. 10. “Ye worship ye know not what. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,” John iv. 22—24. As there be some in the world that worship a false god, so there be others that worship the true God with false worship. They that worship the beast, worship the devil, Rev. xiii. Oh ! meddle not with false worship, with vain worship, and will-worship : worship God as he teacheth us to worship him. Our work is to depend on Christ’s work : our outward working is to depend on God’s inward working,

Fourthly, From false opinions ; from error and sedition. Let your hearts be upright, your judgments sound, and your lives holy. Love the truth, and obey the truth, and hold fast the truth. Now, beloved, let me beseech you for God’s sake, and for Christ’s sake, and for your souls’ sake, keep yourselves from false teachers, from false doc-

trine, from false worship, from false opinions. If you will be tasting and supping at Babylon's cup, you must resolve to receive more or less of Babylon's plagues.

XVIII. Be one with every one that is one with Christ.

“ Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all ;” Eph. iv. 3—6. “ Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments ;” 1 John v. 1, 2. “ He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?” 1 John iv. 20.

Oh ! consider what a dishonour it is to the gospel, that those that profess themselves sons of the same God, members of the same Christ, temples of the same Spirit, heirs of the same glory, should be jarring one with another : it is strange and unnatural, that they who are saints in profession, should be devils in practice one to another ; that God's diamonds should cut one another ! For wolves to devour the lambs is no wonder, but for lambs to devour one another, is a wonder, and monstrous. Oh ! that Christians, instead of loving one another, should hate one another ! Oh, how unlike are we

to that God whom we profess to be our God! He is full of love, full of goodness, and full of mercy and patience. Oh! but Christians cannot bear and forbear one with another. Oh! do not wicked men warm themselves at the sparks of our divisions, and say, It is as we would have it.

Oh! beloved, hath not God made his wrath to smoke against us, for the divisions and heart-burnings that have been amongst us! Oh! that you would lay this to heart, and throw away discord and divisions, and heart-burnings, and labour for a oneness in love and affection, with every one that is one with Christ. Oh, labour for a healing spirit. You cannot love God if you do not love the people of God. "If any man saith he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." "Let brotherly love continue," Heb. xiii. 1. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. Christ's doves flock together. There be many that cannot love a man unless he be of their opinions, or a member of their church, though he be a member of Christ. Every man hath a good opinion of his own opinion: but, alas! beloved, it is not this opinion, nor that opinion, nor this way, nor that way, will bring a man to heaven, without faith in Christ: and he that hath faith in Christ, hath a right to all the ordinances of Christ, and promises of Christ, and privileges of Christ. Therefore let me beseech you, to love every man that is a godly man, let him be of what way and form he will.

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul,” Acts iv. 32.

XIX. Love Christ with a love stronger than life, who loved us with a love stronger than death.

“Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again,” John x. 17, 18. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save sinners,” 1 Tim. i. 15.

Christ’s love to us was stronger than death. He died for love; he laid down his life to save our lives: he loves us as the Father loves him, John xv. 9. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.” Oh, the scripture hath exceeding high expressions of his affection to us. Now, beloved, he died for us, and suffered for us, and set his heart upon us to love us and to delight in us; how ought we then to love him again! “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” Matth. xxvii. 37. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee,” Psal. lxxiii. 25. “Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious,” 1 Pet. ii. 7. Oh! let your hearts be full of love and affection to Christ: love will breed courage, and cast out slavish fear before God, and carnal

fear before men; God can keep us from the torments of men, but men cannot keep us from the torments of God; whilst we stand by God, God hath promised to stand by us: therefore be not afraid of any authority that stands in opposition to the authority of Christ: none can promise better than Christ can, none can threaten us worse than Christ can. Can any one threaten us with worse than Christ can? Can any one promise us a better thing than heaven? Can any one threaten us with worse than hell? Heaven is promised to them that love him, and hell is to be the portion of those that hate him.

Oh! my dear brethren, let us love him with a love stronger than death: so did Paul and the rest of the apostles. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Rom. viii. 35. "Love is stronger than death; many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it," Cant. viii. 6, 7.

XX. Be every day as serious in your preparations for death, as if it were your last day.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come," Job xiv. 14. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," James iv. 14. "Behold thou hast made my days as an

hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee. Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity," Psal. xxxix. 5.

As no saint knows when that time and hour shall be, so no wicked man knows when it shall be. To live without the fear of death is to die living. To labour not to die, is to labour in vain. Men are afraid to die in such and such sins, but not afraid to live in such and such sins. Oh! the hell of horrors and terrors that attends those souls that have their greatest work to do when they come to die! Therefore as ye would be happy at death, and everlastingly blessed after death, prepare and set yourselves for death. Did Christ die for us, that we might live with him; and shall not we desire to die, and be with him? A believer's dying day is his crowning day. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labour, and their works do follow them," Rev. xiv. 13.

Oh! I beseech you, my brethren, every day spend some time in preparation for, and meditation of death, judgment, hell, heaven, and eternity. Eternity is a sum that can never be numbered, a line that can never be measured; eternity is a condition of everlasting sorrow, or everlasting joy. Oh! think on this, and prepare for this every day, before the night of death comes.

And thus, my beloved, I have given you these twenty precious directions for your souls.

I shall leave this book with you as a legacy of my dearest love. My desire in all this is your happiness here, and your blessedness hereafter.

My earnest and humble desire of you is, that you would mind this book and my former treatises; not only read them, but reform your lives by them. Oh! do your duty, live in your duty, and love your duty, that you may be made meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; which is, and shall be, the earnest and constant prayer of one that esteems it a most glorious privilege to be of the number of those who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”



FOLLOW THE LAMB.

Rev. xiv. 4. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*

THE title of this book tells us, it is the Revelation of John, and John tells us, chap. i. 1. “It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ: CHRIST’S Revelation to John, and John’s Revelation to us.

The command of this book is set forth in chap. i. 19. “Write these things that are, and the things that shall be hereafter.”

And into these two parts this book is divided.

First, A revelation of the things that are referred to the seven churches of Asia.

Secondly, A revelation of the general estate of the church to come, and from John's time unto the second coming of the Lord.

The words of this book are the true sayings of the true God : "They are therefore true and faithful," chap. xxii. 6.

The matter of this book so much concerns the good of the church, that Jesus Christ commanded every one that hath an ear to hear, to hearken what the Spirit of God saith to the church; and to shew how earnest Christ Jesus is to have all his members and servants acquainted with the things revealed in this book; this charge he repeats eight times over, as this book shews, chap. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29. and chap. viii. 6, 13, 22. and xiii. 9.

A blessing is pronounced upon the reader, hearer, and doer of these things written in this book, chap. xiii. Oh! what can be said more, or more effectually to stir us up to hear and read than blessedness? "And blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book," chap. xxii. 7. But how shall we keep them except we read them?

The excellency of this book is such as neither man nor angel, none in heaven or earth, or under the earth, was found worthy so much as to look into it, till Jesus Christ went and took it out of his Father's hand to open it to us, chap. v. 4.

The blessed St. John could not but weep for fear lest this book should have been kept close from him and the church; so earnest was he to know these things which we neglect to know, chap. v. 4.

This book is a most precious jewel which Christ hath bestowed upon his church in the latter days; and it is our great duty to look into it, and read it, and study it, open it, and expound it, that all the people may be acquainted with it; especially in these times. For now in this age is, and shall be, the very heat of the war, and brunt of the battle betwixt God and Belial, betwixt Christ and Antichrist, betwixt the Lamb's followers, and the beast's followers. Now this book layeth all open, and plainly tells us what shall be the issue and success in the day of battle; which side shall have the victory, and which side shall go down, chap. xvii. 19. And certainly the sons of Belial shall not prevail: the date of their being is almost out, and their time draweth on apace, wherein both he and their beast shall be laid in the dust.

This book sheweth us the rising of the beast, the declining of the beast, and ruin of the beast, chap. xviii.

Our Lord Jesus hath shewed in this book, the sorrow, and sufferings, and afflictions, and tribulation which the church was to meet with in the latter times, chap. xi. 7. and chap. xii. 14, 15, and chap. iii. 7.

And her deadly and her cruel enemies, the whore of Babylon, the mother of harlots, the beast, the false prophets, and the great red dragon, which maketh war against her, and casteth out floods after her, chap. xii. 16.

This book sheweth us likewise the true state of the true church upon earth, and what she is, where she is, how she is, and what she shall be hereafter : and that before the slaying, under the slaying, and after the slaying.

I. Before the slaying time, the true church is in the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared for her of God, "that they should feed her a thousand two hundred and threescore days," chap. xxii. 2.

Before the slaying of the witnesses, the true worshippers of God are in a low condition, in heaviness and sadness, in sackcloth and ashes, in a mourning and suffering state, being scattered and dispersed here and there, as Israel was of old. But though this be the condition of the poor woman in the wilderness, yet she is not without comfort, she may take comfort in three things.

1. That God prepared a place for her. 2. That God nourished her, and locked her up in his chamber of providence. 3. That God numbered her days of suffering. The tribulation of the saints in the Old Testament is reckoned up still by years ; as the bondage of Egypt 430 years, and the captivity of Babylon 70 years ; but under the New Testament

by days, “Ye shall have tribulation ten days,” chap. ii. 10. “And the two witnesses shall lie dead three days and a half,” chap. xi. 9. So the woman was to be in the wilderness a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

The church is compared to a woman for four reasons :

1. As a woman is weak and feeble, so is the church, and can do nothing without Christ, John xv. 5.

2. As a woman is useful and fruitful, so is the church, John xv. 2.

3. As a woman is fair and beautiful, so is the church, Ezek. xvi. 13.

4. As a woman is full of love and affection, so is the church, Cant. ii. 5.

1. Under the slaying times, the worshippers of God, and witnesses of Jesus Christ, lay dead on the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt; chap. xi. 18. That is, in antichrist’s kingdoms and dominions. “The woman which thou sawest, is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth,” chap. xvii.

She is called Sodom, for her filthiness, and wickedness; and Egypt for her cruelty and oppression, chap. xvii. 18.

The true servants of God and members of Jesus Christ, that bear witness for him against the evils of the beast and against the evils of the world, are here called two witnesses. 1. Because of the few-

ness of them. 2. Because two is a number sufficient to bear witness, John viii. 17. 3. Because antichrist's beasts are called two; chap. xiii. 4. They are called witnesses for five reasons.

First, Because their work is to bear witness for Christ and his truth, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. A true believer is to bear a threefold testimony to, and for Christ: a word-testimony, a life-testimony, and a blood-testimony, Heb. xii. John v. 33.

Secondly, Christ's members are called witnesses, because they stand up for Christ to maintain his name, his honour, his cause, his truth, his worship, his glory in the world, Dan. iii. 16—18, and chap. vi. "And ye killed the Prince of Life whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses," Acts iii. 15. "Be it known unto you all, and to the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole," Acts iv. 10.

Thirdly, The Lamb's followers are called witnesses, because they keep the testimony of Jesus Christ: Rev. xii. 16. and vi. 9. A testimony of all the offices, works, and kingdoms of Jesus Christ, as King of saints and King of nations.

Fourthly, God's chosen and precious ones are called witnesses, because they do appear boldly and openly for his truth; they own it, they love it, they publish it, they hold it fast, and suffer for it; who,

through the teaching of the Spirit in the word, and by the power of the same Spirit, are found in the practice of Christ's appointment: they cannot deny the truth which is a testimony of it, Acts xxiv. 14.

Fifthly, The true worshippers of God are called witnesses, because they do bear witness against the beast, and all the whole mystery of iniquity; against the whore of Babylon, who hath committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, Rev. xvii. 6.

Christ's faithful witnesses bear an eminent testimony against all her abominations, and filthiness, and wickedness; against the Pope, his government, his clergy, his doctrine, his worship, his religion, and his abominable proceedings, Rev. xix. 7.

Sixthly, Christ's redeemed ones are called witnesses, because in dying they bear witness for him: for to die for the truth is a living standing testimony to it. He who for Christ's sake loves not his life unto the death, dies a most glorious witness of Christ, chap. xii. 11. "And they loved not their lives unto the death; and the beast that came out of the bottomless pit made war against them, and overcame them, and killed them," chap. xi. 7.

Antichrist riseth in a double beast, in his civil power, and in his ecclesiastical power.

First, In his civil power; so he makes up one

beast with the ten kings, chap. xvii. 12. And this is the beast that riseth out of the sea, which had "seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his head the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were like unto the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority," chap. xiii. 1, 2.

Secondly, In the ecclesiastical power; so he makes up another beast, the clergy; and that is that beast that rose up out of the earth: he hath "two horns like a lamb, and he spake like a dragon," ver. 11.

Now these two monstrous beasts, antichrist's magistrates and ministers, slay the faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ, and rejoice over their dead bones, and make merry, and send gifts one to another; chap. xi. 10. Oh, how do graceless, faithless, and christless men rejoice, at the afflictions and calamities of God's people! saying, Where is now your God, and Christ your king? Psal. xlii. 10.

As touching the nature of the witnesses' death we are not to conceive thereof, as though the same were to be a corporeal killing or slaying, but a civil killing or slaying; not so much their bodies as their testimonies, depriving and stripping them of their liberty, worship, ordinances, religion, and the free exercise of their gifts; suffering not a servant of Jesus Christ to bear a testimony against

the abominations of the beast, nor against her national wickedness ; but make laws against them, and lie in wait for them, stopping their mouths, and imprisoning their bodies, beating and hunting them up and down, afflicting and tormenting them, and taking possession of their possessions, killing and slaying them all the day long, and accounting them as sheep for the slaughter, Rom. viii. 36.

This is to be broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, Psal. xlv. 19.

This is to be killed all the day long ; and upon this account the witnesses are said to be slain.

“ And after three days and a half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet ; and great fear fell upon them that saw them ;” chap. xi. 11. And they had a spirit of boldness and courage, zeal and undauntedness, and resolution to appear for Christ and his cause against antichrist, and the whole brood. “ Therefore rejoice all ye saints, and be glad all ye upright in heart ; though the witnesses be dead, they will not be always dead, but rise again.”

2. After the slaying time, the church is with the Lamb on mount Sion ; chap. xiv. 1. “ And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written on their foreheads ;” which notes a fixed state. “ Those which trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be moved,” Psal. cxxv. 1.

Before the slaying time, the church is very low ; but under the slaying time lower : but after the slaying time the church is very high ; she is rejoicing and shining, and triumphing on mount Sion. “ And they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and elders, and no man could learn that song, but the hundred forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.”

The true church having gotten the glorious presence of the Lamb, and the Lamb in the midst of her ; and having gotten the victory over the beast, they rejoice mightily.

“ And I heard a voice of harpers harping with their harps.”

But this was not till after the resurrection of the witnesses ; and when the witnesses are risen, the church is exceeding joyful.

This chapter out of which my text is taken, containeth six principal things.

First, A lovely description of Jesus Christ ; and he is described by the similitude of a Lamb, “ Lo, a Lamb stood upon mount Sion,” ver. 4. And “ behold the Lamb of God,” John i. 29.

He is called a Lamb in a double respect ; 1. In respect of his innocency, 1 Pet. i. 19. 2. In respect of his meekness and patience, Acts viii. 12.

Secondly, A lively description of the church, the Lamb’s wife, and that from ver. 1. to ver. 5.

Thirdly, A glorious description of the church’s

ministers. As the church is in this book called heaven, so her ministers are called angels. "And I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel," ver. 6. "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen," ver. 8. "And the third angel followed him, saying with a loud voice," &c. ver. 9.

Fourthly, Here is set down the doctrine which these angels preach and publish.

The first angel published the free grace of God in Jesus Christ openly against all the inventions of men, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give glory to him: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters," verse 7. Namely, that man should only fear God and worship him, and give all glory to him; none to creatures, none to images, none to antichrist: he that worshippeth the beast, worshippeth the beast and the devil, chap xiii.

The second angel proclaimeth utter ruin to Babylon, and the destruction thereof over the world: saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city; because she hath made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication," ver. 8.

The third angel doth seriously and solemnly give warning to all those who shall adhere to the beast, shewing the danger and misery of it. "If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same

shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," ver. 9, 10.

Fifthly, A sweet word of heavenly consolation to the saints and people of God: 'And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them," verse 13.

Sixthly, The judgment and vengeance which shall be executed upon the false church; the Spirit doth set it forth by a double similitude, the one by reaping, and the other by gathering; and that from verse 16. to the end. God will, as it were, rain hell out of heaven upon Babylon; he hath fire and brimstone for his spiritual Sodom, judgment without mercy, and fury without compassion.

I shall now come to the words of my text, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

This text is one of the golden characters of the hundred forty and four thousand, which stood with the Lamb upon Mount Sion.

In these words are three things. 1. The subject, *These*. 2. The act, *Follow*. 3. The object, *The Lamb whithersoever he goeth*.

I shall gather this observation from the words,

That it is the sweet temper and frame of a soul truly gracious, to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” In the handling of this point I shall shew you five things.

First, What it is to follow the Lamb.

Secondly, Why they follow the Lamb.

Thirdly, The excellency of following the Lamb

Fourthly, The misery of them that follow not the Lamb.

Fifthly, How the Lamb’s followers may be known from the beast’s followers.

First, To follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, is to follow him in four things.

1st, In his commandments: “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” John xiv. 14, 15.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,” chap. xv. 14.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life,” Rev. xxii. 14. Oh, beloved, we cannot follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, unless we follow him in his commandments; “Then shall I not be ashamed,” saith David, “when I have respect unto all thy commandments,” Psal. clix. 6. Christians should take as much delight in those precepts that enjoin holiness. as in those promises that assure happiness.

2ndly, In his teaching: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:” John x. 27. “A stranger they will not follow, but will

flee from him ; for they know not the voice of a stranger, ver. 5.

3rdly, In his providences : through all afflictions, all straits, all discouragements and sorrows whatsoever, though it be the way of blood, we must forsake all to follow a crucified Christ, a condemned Christ, in bloody paths of sufferings, if he calls us to it : “ Yea, though I walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” Psal. xxiii. 4. “ For,” saith Paul, “ I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We must be willing to venture the loss of all for him ; liberty, estates, relations, and life itself : “ We have forsaken all and followed thee,” Matth. xix. 27.

4thly, In his example : “ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you,” John xiii. 15. that “ because Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps,” 1 Pet. ii. 21. So that to follow Christ’s steps is to take him for an example ; we must walk in the same spirit, the same steps, and in the same obedience : we must not follow wicked men’s example, who walk in the broad way that leads to death, “ and are of their father the devil, and his works they do,” John viii. 44.

But we must follow our head Christ, who went up and down doing good, Acts x. 38. Now this is

to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;” in his commands, in his teaching, in his providences, in his examples.

Secondly, To “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” is to follow him truly, without hypocrisy; and constantly, without apostasy.

1st, Truly, without hypocrisy; many follow the Lamb, as beggars follow a man, only for an alms; they prize the wages of religion above the works of religion: “Ye seek me not because of the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled,” John vi. 26. Oh, beloved, God abhors an hypocrite more than a Sodomite; and hell is provided on purpose for hypocrites, Matth. xxiv. 51.

My beloved, following the Lamb fully, is to have the heart fixed and resolved for God: “My soul follows hard after thee,” saith David, Psal. lxiii. 8. “And as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,” Psal. xlii. 1.

And the faculties of his soul are working after God: “My soul, and all that is within me, praise the Lord,” saith holy David.

2ndly, Constantly, without apostasy.

A true believer after he begins to follow the Lamb, he never leaves following him, but followeth him whithersoever he goeth: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Rom. viii. 35. “Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? For I am

persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," verse 38, 39. Oh, beloved, he doth not follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, that follows the Lamb earnestly for a while, but afterwards forsaketh him, when the storm ariseth: "Yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended," Matth. xiii. 21. Nor he that follows the Lamb in some things, and the beast in other things; "They feared the Lord, and served other gods, after the manner of the nations." Nor he that followeth the Lord in a dull heavy manner, and lukewarm temper; "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert either cold or hot," Rev. iii. 15. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12, 13.

Oh! this is not following the Lamb; they that follow the Lord fully, abide in the Lord, and cleave to the Lord, and continue constantly in God's ways, unto the end of their days.

"The righteous shall hold on his way," Job

xvii. 9. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," Hos. vi. 3. The righteous man holds on his way, he follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

1. Speedily. 2. Truly. 3. Undividedly. 4. Kealously. 5. Humbly. 6. Cheerfully. 7. Diligently. 8. Constantly. 9. Faithfully. 10. Transcendently.

Now this is to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Now I shall shew you why believers follow the Lamb.

First, Because they are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

He paid a price for our redemption, that so he might discharge the debt of our sins.

"And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seal thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," Rev. v. 9.

There are three things called *precious* in the scripture.

First, Faith is called precious, 2 Pet. i. 2.

Secondly, The promises are called precious, ver. 4.

Thirdly, The blood of Christ is called precious,
1 Pet. i. 9.

Oh! his blood hath redeemed us from six enemies.

First, From the world; Gal. iv. Rev. xxi.

Secondly, From the curse; Gal. iii. 13.

Thirdly, From sin; Rom. vi. 18—22.

Fourthly, From the devil; Heb. ii. 18. Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

Fifthly, From the sting of death; 1 Cor. xv 25, 26.

Sixthly, From hell; 1 Thess. i. 10. Rev. ii. 12.

Oh! his blood is precious blood, his blood hath slain our enemies; he hath purchased by his blood reconciliation with the Father, union with the Son, communion with the Holy Ghost: "Ye that were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13—16.

Secondly, They follow the Lamb, because they are washed in the blood of the Lamb: "He that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xvii. 4. "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7. Christ's blood washeth away our bloody sins; "I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live," Ezek. xvi. 6. For as

we were united with Christ our sins are upon him, and his righteousness upon us. It is Christ that gives us life, and puts excellent ornaments upon us, to cover our nakedness, and decketh us with jewels, and gems of gold, so we become beautiful in his sight, Isa. lx. 10.

“That he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing: but that it should be holy without blemish,” Eph. v. 27.

Thirdly, Believers follow the Lamb, because they are risen with the Lamb; “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,” Col. iii. 1.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism, into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,” Rom. vi. 4. Every man, besides a believer is a dead man in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Therefore they are exhorted to rise from the dead, Eph. v. 4. They must rise from evil to do good, from earthly mindedness to heavenly mindedness: but now, by faith believers are risen from darkness to light: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of light,” Eph. v. 8. “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,” Isa. lx. 1. When the Lord shineth forth upon his people in glorious dis-

coveries of himself, he calls them away from their former condition : when the Lord discovered himself in a gospel dispensation, his people were no longer to sit under dark clouds of legal ceremonies, but to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Fourthly, They follow the Lamb, because they are enlightened by the Lamb : “ God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. “ But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,” 2 Cor. iii. 18. “ Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” Phil. iii. 8. Divine and heavenly knowledge brings men near to God, it gives a man the clearest and fullest sight of God ; and the nearer any man comes to God, the clearer vision we have of God, and the more communion with God.

The reason why others do not follow the Lamb, is because they see not the worth and want of the Lamb ; “ Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts,” Eph. iv. 18.

Where there is a vail cast before the eyes of knowledge, there is a bar set before the hands of practice. An ignorant person neither knows what

he is doing, nor does he know whither he is going he doth nothing but undo himself by doing. Carnal men see no preciousness nor loveliness in Christ: Oh! "What is thy beloved more than another beloved!" Cant. v. 9. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that asketh, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John iv. 10.

Christ goes undesired to the world, because he goes undiscerned by the world: "but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. iv. 14. But now believers being enlightened by the Spirit of God, and by the word of God, they see themselves what they were before faith, and what they are by faith, and what they shall be at the end of faith: they see Christ to be all precious in his ordinances, precious in his discoveries, precious in his graces, precious in his gifts, precious in his promises, precious in his members, precious in his ministers, and precious in himself, 1 Pet. ii. 8. Therefore believers cannot but love him, and follow him.

Fifthly, They follow the Lamb, because they love the Lamb: "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. They love him with a superlative love: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxii. 25. The

spouse of Christ looks upon what she is, as not great enough for his remembrance, and what she doth, as not good enough for his acceptance: "Lock not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me, my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept," Cant. i. 6.

The church is never more fair than when she judgeth herself to be the most deformed; never more happy, than when she reckons herself most miserable; never more holy, than when she accounts herself most polluted; she is never richer, than when she seeth herself to be poorest of all. The soul that loves much, is a soul that works much: the commands of the gospel are not grievous to him, but precious to him; "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest;" Cant. i. 7. A soul that loves Christ, hath his eyes upon Christ, and his desire is after Christ: "the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night: yea, with my spirit will I seek thee early."

True believers love Christ more than they love themselves; "They loved not their lives unto the death," Rev. xii. 11. Christ is dearer to them than their lives; they slighted, contemned, yea, despised their very lives, when they stood in competition with Christ, and his glory, and chose rather to

suffer the greatest misery than he should lose the least dram of his honour. The love of Christ hath made the saints and witnesses yield all the members of their bodies to the cruel and merciless instrument of bloody persecutors; their backs to be whipped, their eyes to be bored, their tongues to be cut out of their mouths, Heb. xi. 36. Oh! how strongly did these love? The measure of loving Christ, is to love him without measure: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation shall not, persecution shall not, famine and nakedness shall not, peril and sword shall not, for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

Sixthly, They follow the Lamb, because they are married to the Lamb. Jer. iii. 25. "I am married unto you." Rev. xxi. 9. "I will shew you the bride, the Lamb's wife." Cant. ii. 16. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Here I will shew you two things:—

1. How Christ comes to be ours.

2. How we come to be Christ's.

1st, Christ comes to be ours, by free donation and gift of the Father: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," John iii. 16.

2ndly, Christ freely gave himself unto us, so that

Christ is ours by his consent. He hath, as it were, passed over himself unto us. "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me," saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20.

3rdly, Christ hath passed himself over into his church by marriage, and therefore she is called "his queen, his spouse, his bride, and his wife," Psal. xlv. 9. Although we had nothing to bring to him, but poverty, shame, sorrow, and misery, yet he took us, and loved us, and married us.

4thly, Christ is ours, by communicating his own Spirit to us.

2. The saints are Christ's four ways.

1st, By the donation of the Father; "God hath made him both Lord and Christ," Acts ii. 26. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 20. "And now," saith Christ, "Behold I and the children whom thou gavest me; thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6. God the Father gave us to God the Son, that he might redeem us; and God the Son did give us to God the Father, that he might sanctify us, and keep us from the evil of the world, ver. 17.

2ndly, We are Christ's by choice: "I have chosen you out of the world;" and the saints are said to be chosen in Christ, Eph. i. 4.

And they are called "a chosen generation," 1 Pet. ii. "And chosen and faithful," Rev. xvii. 14.

3rdly, The saints are Christ's by purchase; we

were in our enemies hands, and under their power, and could not free ourselves from the bondage of the law, sin, Satan, death, and hell ; therefore, saith the apostle, “ We are bought with a price,” 1 Cor. vi. 20.

For in respect of God’s justice, we are bought by Christ.

4thly, We are Christ’s by combination and covenant : “ I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine,” Ezek. xvi. 8. That is, I did make a solemn covenant of stipulation with thee, that I would take thee to be my people. So that it is no wonder believers follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth ; they are married to him, he is their Head and Husband.

Seventhly, They follow the Lamb, because they have the spirit of the Lamb : “ We have not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are of God ; and we have the mind of Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. ii. 12, 16. “ And we know that he abides in us by the Spirit which he hath given us. Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The Spirit that the Lord Jesus gives to believers, is a sealing Spirit, a lively Spirit, an enlightening Spirit, a leading Spirit ; it leads from all evil to all good : and all the Lamb’s followers are in the spirit of the Lamb ; and therefore, they pray in the Spirit, and with the Spirit, and by the Spirit, and for more of the Spirit : they that have this Spirit

need not a book to pray by. Now, all true believers have the spirit of the Lamb ; therefore they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Eighthly, Believers follow the Lamb, because all their privileges come from the Lamb ; they are all “ kings and priests,” Rev. i. 6. and v. 10. “ And sons and heirs.” 1 John ii. 1. “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” Rom. viii. 17. “ And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

Though believers have not a crown of life, yet they are heirs to a crown of life : God puts the greatest honour upon his own people, Prov. xii. 26. All the honour that other men have is not worth the having : that which makes a man great in the eyes of the world, makes a man nothing in the eyes of God : men are never the better of their greatness, if they are not the better by their greatness. But now, believers, greatness and honours come by Christ ; the faithful and true Witness, the First begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. “ He hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth,” Rev. v. 10. All the light, and life, and hope, and joy, and peace, and beauty, and honour, and riches believers have, they have it all by Christ, and from Christ : He gave them rich grace, and rich glory, and all things richly to enjoy, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

Take a man that is out of Christ, and he hath

none of all this. Eph. ii. 12. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, yea, he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17.

Oh! this is the condition of every graceless, faithless, and Christless person. But now, a believer, though he be never so poor in the world's eye, he is rich in God's eye: "For all things are his, and he shall inherit all things:" 1 Cor. iii. 22. Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." But how comes it to pass that a believer hath so much, and all others so little? He hath it all from Christ: "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. Therefore believers do glory in Christ, because they have all their glory by and from Christ, 1 Cor. i. 31. He hath enough to glory in, that hath Christ to glory in. Now believers cannot but cleave to him, and follow him, because all their good things come by him.

Ninthly, They follow the Lamb, because their names are written in the Lamb's book; Rev. xiii. 8. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whosoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are

written in the Lamb's book of life; Rev. xxi. 27. "All the rest of the worshippers of the beast, and all unbelievers, shall be cast into the lake of fire which burns and flames for ever," Rev. xix. 10. There be a great many that follow the beast, worship the beast, receive the mark of the beast, and admire the beast, chap. xiii. 16. But what are they, are they many that have their names written in the Lamb's book of life? No, no; for this see, Rev. xvii. 8. "The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and shall go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life." So that you see what that cursed crew are that follow Babylon, they are such whose names are not written in the book of life. But they that have their Father's name written in their forehead, and their names written in the Lamb's book, they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful, Rev. xvii. 14.

Tenthly and lastly, Precious ones follow the Lamb, because they shall be for ever with the Lamb: "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words," 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple; and he

that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 15—17. How troublesome soever a saint's beginning is, his end is joyful. When believers change earth for heaven, they do not lose their happiness, but complete their happiness. John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou gavest me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." Not only with me for ever, but with my saints, with my angels, and with my Father, and with all that are with me.

To be with God and Christ for ever, implieth these seven things. 1. The presence of God. 2. The happy union with God. 3. The blessed vision of God. 4. The glorious communion with God. 5. The fruition of God. 6. The rest that the saints shall have in God. 7. The enjoyment of themselves in God.

Oh! how unspeakable is the glory of heaven! Oh! how infinitely glorious is the Lamb! Now true believers follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, because they shall be for ever with the Lamb, in fulness of glory, and endless felicity, Rom. viii. 17. Thus have I shewed you why believers fol-

low the Lamb. Now I shall shew you the excellency of following the Lamb.

The first excellency is, They that follow the Lamb, have the presence of the Lamb with them. The hundred forty and four thousand that stood upon mount Sion, had the Lamb with them, Psal. xlv. 5. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early; the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," ver. 8. God is in the midst of his church, not only to behold her, but uphold her; though the church's enemies may be waves to toss her, yet they shall never be rocks to split her; because God is in the midst of her. This is that which comforted and strengthened David: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me," Psal. xxii. 4. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2. Oh! they that follow the Lamb, shall stand for the Lamb, have the presence of the Lamb, his glorious presence, his gracious presence, his comforting presence, his protecting presence, his quickening sanctifying presence.

The second excellency is, That they that follow the Lamb, shall know the mind of the Lamb: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the

kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. And blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear;" Matth. xiii. 11, 16. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xviii. 6—8. Jesus Christ that lies in the bosom of the Father, he unbosoms and unbowels the heart of his Father to believers: they know his secrets, his mind, his counsel, and his will, and none knoweth it but them. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes;" Matth. xi. 25. But they that walk with God, know much of the mind of God, and the mysteries of the gospel.

The third excellency of following the Lamb is, They that follow the Lamb, may come boldly to the Lamb: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. A soul that hath an interest in Christ, may come boldly to Christ, and speak boldly to him, and to his Father, for any mercy he needeth: he may go to the throne of grace for grace, and open his heart to God, as one friend to another. Oh! what liberty have believers! Oh! what a privilege have they, that they may go to God with a holy boldness! the wicked proud ones of the earth are so high that

the poor saints cannot come boldly and freely unto them; but they may come boldly and freely unto the Lord their God. Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The fourth excellency is, That tney that follow the Lamb, shall have all their wants supplied by the Lamb: Phil. iv. 19. "But my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." They that follow the Lamb shall want no good thing: "Oh, fear the Lord ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Psal. xxxvi. 9, 10. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," Psal. xxiii. 1. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart; thou shalt have whatsoever thou desirest to have. He that hath the chiefest good shall want no good. "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; and he that cometh unto me shall never hunger," John vi. 35. Oh! who would not follow and believe in the Lamb. Oh happy are all that love the Lamb!

The fifth excellency is, They that follow the Lamb, shall share with the Lamb,

First, In his divine nature: "Whereby are given unto us, exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be made partakers

of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Pet. i. 4. That is, "of those divine qualities whereby we are made like unto God, in wisdom, righteousness, and true holiness," John iv. 24.

Secondly, In his conquests: the poor saints share with Christ in all his noble and honourable conquests, 1 Cor. xv. 55, over all the world, death, and hell; and over sufferings: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 37.

Thirdly, They share with Christ in his graces: "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. As a child receives member for member, as the paper from the press receives letter for letter, as the wax from the seal receives print for print, or as the glass from the image receives face for face, or do believers receive from Christ grace for grace; that is, for every grace that is in the Lamb, there is the same grace in us in some measure.

Fourthly, Believers share with Christ in his glorious titles: he is called a Son, so are they; a King, so are they; a Priest, so are they; an Heir, so are they, Rom. viii. 17. Rev. v. 16. and i. 5, 6.

Fifthly, They share with Christ in his glory: "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also," John xiv. 3. "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may

be one even as we are one," John xvii. 23. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life," John x. 27, 28.

The saints shall have the same glory which Christ himself hath: the saints in heaven are not only glorified with Christ (which is the great exaltation) but they do enjoy the very same glory which Christ himself doth, the same for kind, though not for degree. The head and members are glorified together with the same kind of glory. God hath not one heaven for his Son, and another for his saints; but one and the same for both. Believers shall be as truly glorious as Christ is, eternally glorious as he is. "Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body: and we shall be glorified together with him, and appear with him in glory," Rom. viii. Col. iii. Oh! here is the excellency of following the Lamb; they that follow him, shall share with him.

The sixth excellency of following the Lamb is, They that follow the Lamb shall be protected by the Lamb. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," Psal. cv. 14, 15. which are his saints. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? And if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, 1 Pet. iii. 13, 14." "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for

I am thy God ; yea, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness," Isa. xli. 40. " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea; they may forget, yet I will not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15. Who can harm a man if God be with him and for him ? He that hath the love of God, needs not care for the anger of man. A true believer hath the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of good angels, the love of good men, and the love of all whose love is worth the having. God protects men in his way, but none out of his way : when men appear for God, God appears for men : he is good to them in affliction, and he doth good to them by affliction.

The seventh excellency is, They that follow the Lamb, shall not feel the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. ii. 11. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death, 1 Thess. i. 10. " And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." " There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Oh, how sad is the condition of those who live and die without Christ : They are sent to hell, Psal. ix. 17. " The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forsake God,"—" who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9. They shall feel and suffer the wrath of the Lamb, because they despised the truth of the Lamb: "Because I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me," Prov. i. 24—29. Do you hear this, sinners, and die in your sins? Be sure hell will shew you no mercy. Now the believer will feel and suffer none of this: he is in a happy state and condition.

The eighth excellency is, They that follow the Lamb shall reign with the Lamb; and this is another excellency of following the Lamb. True believers do reign now over the creatures, over the pomp and pride of the world, over all spirits, over sin, over the consciences of wicked men, and over sufferings; but besides all this, they shall reign with Christ, and over those that now reign over them, Rev. v. 10. "And we shall reign on the earth," chap. xx. 4. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." And as the wicked tread down the saints under their feet now, so shall the saints then tread down the wicked under their

feet, Mal. iv. 3. The Lord hath promised that the meek shall inherit the earth. Do not the scriptures say, that "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be lifted up above the hills, and shall be established in the top of the mountains?" Isa. ii. 2. and that the kingdoms of the world must become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ? Rev. xi. 15. And he that loves to see the face of the church beautiful, will ere long wipe away the bloody tears. It is not long before you will triumph and say, Cant. ii. 11, 12. "Lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come."

The ninth excellency is, They that follow the Lamb shall sit on the throne with the Lamb: Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne. Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matth. xix. 28. Oh! what an honour is this, what a glory is this, to sit upon the throne with Christ! Is it not honour and glory enough for us to be in heaven with God, and Christ, and angels, but we must sit upon a throne there? Oh, what an honour is this, and yet this honour shall all the Lamb's followers have.

The tenth excellency of following the Lamb is, They that follow the Lamb shall judge the world with the Lamb. If you consult the sacred records,

you will find that both God, and Christ, and the saints, are said to judge the world. The ordination is God's, the execution is Christ's the approbation is the saint's. When the apostle would stop the sinful suits among the Corinthian brethren, that did not want men of eminency to put a period unto controversies, he saith, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" 1 Cor. vi. 2. Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all:" Jude, ver. 14, 15. "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matth. xix. 28. Now the world judges the saints, but then the saints shall judge the world; now they judge and condemn Christ and his members, but then they shall be judged and condemned by Christ and his members. For as the world cannot endure God himself, so neither can they endure God in the saints; and the more God dwells in the saints, the more the world afflicts the saints: but they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, shall then sit upon those that now sit upon them.—Thus I have shewed you the excellencies of following the Lamb.

Fourthly, The misery of those that follow not the Lamb, but the beast: Oh, their misery is great in this life, but it will be greater in the other.

The first misery of them that follow the beast is, They that follow him, shall share with him in all his plagues : “ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand ; the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb,” Rev. xiv. 9, 10. Oh, the plagues, the terrible plagues that shall fall upon the beast ! “ Death, and mourning, and famine, and fire,” chap. xviii. 8. The judgment shall come upon all parties, and upon all degrees and conditions of men that join with the beast : all those that do partake of his sins, shall share of his plagues.

There is, *First*, “ A vial poured out upon the earth ;” that is, upon the common people, chap. xvi. 2.

Secondly, “ Another vial upon the sea,” that is, the jurisdiction of Rome, ver. 3.

Thirdly, “ Another vial upon the rivers,” that is, their ministers, ver. 4.

Fourthly, “ Another vial is poured out upon the sun,” that is, princes and magistrates, ver. 8.

Fifthly, “ Another vial upon the seat,” that is, Rome itself, the throne of the beast, ver. 10. So that all that worship the beast, and receive his mark, and belong to him, whether they be high or

low, rich or poor, if they do not come off from him, they shall share with him in all his plagues. "Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4.

The second misery of them that follow the beast is, They shall cry to the rocks, and to the mountains of the earth: "And the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. iv. 15—17.

The wicked, though here clothed in silk and velvet, shall wish for the mountains to cover them, which would be but a poor shelter; for the mountains melt at the presence of the Lord, and the rocks rent asunder when he is angry. They that made others flee away from them, as innocent lambs from devouring wolves, shall be afraid of the wrath of the Lamb, that sitteth on the throne. Oh! how will these great men dare to appear before his tribunal, that have stained the sword of authority with the blood of innocency, by turning its back against the vicious, and whetting its edge against the righteous: many an unjust judge, that may be now sits confidently upon the bench, shall then stand

trembling at the bar. Oh! how will they be able to lift up their heads before Christ, who have lifted up their hands against Christ? "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ," Acts iv. 26. Rev. xvii. 14. Instead of helping the Lord against the mighty, they help the mighty against the Lord, Psal. ii. 2. Oh! how many great men are there that make no other use of their greatness but to be great in wickedness, great swearers, great drunkards, great sabbath-breakers, great persecutors, great adulterers, great atheists, who instead of denying or forsaking the devil and all his works, follow the devil and all his works: who sin with content, and are not content with their sins. "The princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves," Isa. i. 2. But the great God against whom the sin is committed, is greater than the greatest, "before whom all nations of the world are but as a drop of a bucket, and as the smallest dust of the balance," Isa. xl. 15. "Who will not fear thee, O King of nations? Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great, and thy power is great," Jer. x. 6, 7. He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke, before whom the devils fear and tremble. Therefore, wo, wo, be to them that forsake him, and follow the beast: they shall cry and call for help, but there will be none to help them.

The third misery of those that follow the beast is,

They shall be cast into a lake of fire with the beast. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophets that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image; these both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 29. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7—9. Oh what a dreadful thing it is to lie under the wrath of God, to lie in burning flames, and for ever to be banished from the presence of God, and his holy angels! This will be the portion of the beast's followers. Oh, will they not wish they had never been born, and that they might be turned into stocks and stones? But, alas! their wishes will do them no good: Christ will say to them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matth. xxv. 41. Oh, ye rulers and great ones of the earth! it will be no dishonour to your honours to lay your honour at his feet; in whose presence "the angels veil their faces, and before whose throne the elders cast their crowns," Isa. vi. 2. Rev. iv. 10. Oh! it is better with patience to suffer with Sion and the church's party a while, rather than join with the Romish

party, and be ruined with them at the end. Rev. xiv. 12. "Here is the patience of the saints." Ye shall suffer a while, and be trodden down by them, and you may stay for a full accomplishment of his promise for your deliverance: but I will surely come, and I will recompense all your patience. And therefore be not discouraged, and faint in your minds; let not your hearts turn back into Egypt, and hanker after Rome, those remnants of Baal, which God will surely destroy.

Fifthly, I will shew you now how the Lamb's followers may be known by the beast's followers.

1st, You may know them by their number, they are in number the fewest: "Many are called, but few are chosen," Matth. xx. 19. "Though all Israel be as the sand in the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved," Rom. ix. 27. And Christ calls his flock, a little flock, Luke xii. 22. And truly, beloved, they are but a few that follow the Lamb, and believe in him. The Heathen follow the devil, the Turks follow Mahomet, the Jews follow Moses, the Papists follow the Pope, and loose Protestants and carnal professors they follow the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the false teachers, false doctrine and false worship; and all the world wonders at the beast, Rev. xiii. 3. "The waters which thou sawest where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," chap. xvii. 15. Believers, though their nature is the sweetest, yet their number is the smallest. In heaven are the

best, but in hell are the most. Oh, dear Christians, there are but few upright Christians; there are many thorns, but few lilies; many almost, but few altogether, Christians.

2ndly, By their characters ye may know them. You have nine lovely characters of them in this 14th chapter:—1. They stand with the Lamb upon mount Zion.—2. They have their Father's name written in their foreheads.—3. They sing a new song, which none can learn but only the hundred forty and four thousand.—4. They are such as are redeemed from the earth.—5. They are virgin saints, not defiled with women.—6. They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—7. They are redeemed from among men.—8. They bring their first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.—9. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God. Oh! how holy, how heavenly, how gracious, how glorious, how lovely and spiritual are these! They live in the Lord, on the Lord, to the Lord, and with the Lord: “They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” 1 Pet. ii. 9.

3rdly, By their spirits; they have another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24. All the Lamb's followers are in the Spirit of the Lamb, Rom. viii. 9. And by the Spirit they are led and taught; a spirit of holiness, a spirit of meekness, a spirit of love, a free spirit, and a true, humble, and faithful spirit, to and for

the Lord. Now, as the Lamb's followers are in the Spirit of the Lamb, so the beast's followers are in the spirit of the beast, which is no other than the spirit of the devil. Eph. ii. 2. "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" a spirit of lording and domineering, a spirit of cunning and craftiness, a spirit of deceit, a spirit of superstition, a spirit of persecution and cruelty; and in this spirit are all the followers of the beast. Now, by this you may know the Lamb's followers from the beast's followers.

4thly, By their name: They have another name, a new name, Rev. iii. 12. God gives his people honourable titles, though the beast gives them reproachful titles; God calls them the dearly beloved of his soul, Jer. xxi. 7. and the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. and his jewel, Mal. iii. 17. his glory, his portion, his bride, his friends and children; but the beast calls them seditious, heretics, deceivers, and deluders, and blasphemers, and fools, and madmen, as if they were not worthy to have a being among men. But though they be ravens in the world's eye, yet they are doves in God's eye; yea, they are such worthies of whom the world are not worthy, Heb. xi. 38. Now, dear Christians, by this you may know the Lamb's followers from others by the nicknames the world giveth them, and by the glorious names that God giveth them.

5thly, By their graces they may be known such

as are the Lamb's followers, are full of faith, full of love, full of grace and goodness. They are very fruitful, and bring forth much fruit, John xv. 5. They are called heaven, because of their heavenliness, Rom. viii. 1.; and holy, because of their holiness; spiritual, because of their spiritualness; and faithful, because of their faithfulness. There is much of God to be seen in them, in their words, works, duties, and conversations, Phil. iii. 20. "For our conversation is in heaven." They seek heavenly things, and walk by an heavenly rule; they eye heavenly objects, and are led by an heavenly spirit: they submit to an heavenly government, and imitate heavenly ones. There is much of heaven in them, and much of them in heaven. "When I awake, I am still with thee," saith David.

But now the beast's followers they are full too; but it is with blood, swearing, cursing, stealing, lying, blasphemy, rebellion, and all manner of abominations and filthiness, Hos. iv. 2. Rom. iii. Rev. iii. 3. Now, beloved, by this you may know Christ's precious ones from the beast's filthy ones.

6thly, The Lamb's followers may be known from the beast's, by their keeping the commandments of God, and faith of Jesus Christ. Rev. xiv. 12. Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. So Rev. xii. 12. "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and made war with the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments of God, having the

testimony of Jesus Christ." True believers cleave to the Lord, and follow him fully: "But my servant Caleb hath followed me fully," Numb. xiv. 24. And Enoch walked with God, Gen. v. 34. And Noah walked with God, Gen. vi. 9. "Let us walk in the Spirit," Rom. v. 25. And they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; they hear his voice, they profess his worship, and obey his doctrine; they abhor antichrist, they follow not the beast, nor receive his mark: but keep the beautiful garments of gospel innocency, and will not touch beastly Babylon.

7thly, By their company: the Lamb's followers keep company together: "Being let go, they went to their own company," Acts iv. 23. So they are said to stand upon a sea of glass together; "And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God," Rev. xv. 2. So they that are with the Lamb upon mount Zion, are together, keep together, and follow the Lamb together. Christ's faithful witnesses do not hear with antichrist's hearers, nor worship with them that worship the beast, for they are come out of Babylon, chap. xviii. 4. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sin, that ye receive not of her plagues. Wherefore come out from among

them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, saith the Lord," 2 Cor. vi. 17. The children of God will not keep company with the children of wrath, for they cannot agree: "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16. Therefore believers keep together, walk together, and worship God together. "And they that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul, and continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," Acts iv. 34. and ii. 42. By this the Lamb's followers are known, to wit, by their company.

8thly, By their language they are known. True believers speak the language of Canaan; their language is scripture language; you may know them by their speech, as Peter was known by his speech; "Surely thou art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee," Matth. xxvi. 73. Their words are holy and heavenly; they speak of God, and to God, and for God, and he heareth them, Mal. iii. 10. But the beast's followers speak wickedly, proudly, daringly and blasphemously, Rev. xiii. 4. And he opened his mouth blaspheming God, his Son, his name, his saints, and they that dwell in heaven, ver. 6. Men are known who, and what they are

and to whom they belong, by their language : if they are of God, and in God, they cannot but speak much of God.

9thly, The Lamb's followers are known by this : they are more afflicted with the church's heaviness, then they are affected with their own happiness. The king said, " Why is thy countenance sad ? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart, seeing thou art not sick. Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof consumed with with fire ? " Neh. ii. 2, 3. How can Sion's sons be rejoicing, when their mother is mourning ? Though they were the Jews' desolation, yet they were Jeremiah's lamentation : How can such rejoice in her standing, that do not mourn for her falling ? When the church's adversaries make long furrows upon her back, we should cast in the seed of tears. " Remember them that are in bonds, as being bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves likewise in the body," Heb. xiii. 3. Sympathizing with others, makes an estate that is joyful more happy, and an estate that is doleful less heavy.

" The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart," Isa. lvii. 1. We may draw up the charge against many now, Amos vi. 4. " They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall." Ver. 6. " That driuk

wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointment. But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." Oh! that there were not too many such now-a-days, that eat the fat and drink the sweet, and are not troubled for Sion's troubles: instead of sympathising with them in their misery, they are censuring them for their misery. But the true servants of God are tender and broken-hearted; they weep and mourn, and wring their hands for Sion's sins, for Sion's breaches, for Sion's calamities, for Sion's grievances. And thus they do, and will do, till they set Sion on mount Sion to be with the Lamb.

10thly, The Lamb's followers are known by their love to Christ, and sufferings for Christ; they choose the worst of sorrows, before they will commit the least of sins. "For thy sake we are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter," Psal. xliv. Rom. viii. 36. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," Matth. x. 22. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake," Matth. v. 11. Love can walk on the water without drowning, and lie in the fire without burning. How shall we land at the haven of rest, if we are not tossed upon the sea of trouble? A believer should live above the love of life, and the fear of death. Though we cannot live without afflictions, yet let us live above afflictions: none are so wel-

come to that spiritual Canaan, as those that swim to it through the red sea of their own blood : in suffering, the offence is done to us ; in sinning, the offence is done to God : in suffering we lose the favour of men ; in sinning, we lose the favour of God : therefore Daniel chose the den of lions, rather than he would forsake the cause of the Lamb, Dan. vi. 6. And the three children chose rather to suffer sadly, than to sin foully, Dan. iii. And “ Moses chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” Heb. xi. 25. It is better to be a martyr than a monarch ; it is better to be a prisoner for Jesus Christ, than to be a prince without Christ or against Christ.

Oh, how precious how glorious, how lovely, and how sweet is Jesus Christ to believers ! Oh, they love him entirely, uprightly, they love his glorious person and the beauty of his holiness, and his name, his honour, his cause, and his members : they will suffer for him, and die for him, because he suffered and died for them, Rev. xxi. 11. “ And they loved not their lives unto the death.” Now by this all men may know the Lamb’s followers from the beast’s followers, viz. by their sorrows and sufferings for Christ, for truth, for righteousness, and for conscience sake, Heb. xx. 34. “ And they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods,” Heb. xi. 35.

Eleventhly, The Lamb’s followers are known by this ; they seek the public good of others, above the

private good of themselves. "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh," Rom. ix. 2, 3. "And now, O Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee," John xvii. 1. He prayed for glory, more for the Father's sake that bestowed it, than for his own sake that received it. A true Christian doth not desire grace only for this end, that God may glorify him; but he desires grace for this end, that he may glorify God: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. Oh! that the Lord Jesus should not only in pity save us, but in love die for us. And David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, Acts xiii. 36. His generation did not serve him, but he served his generation; not the generation that was before him, for they were dead before he was living: not the generation that was behind him, for they were living after he was dead; but his own generation: and not by his own will, but by the will of God. Old Eli mourned more for the loss of his religion, than for the loss of his relations, 1 Sam. iv. 18. So Moses, Exod. xx. 10. "Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." He was no self-seeker, but a life

preserver. Grace doth not only make a man carry it like a man to God, but carry it like a God to man: reason makes a man a man, but grace makes a man a Christian. Every gracious spirit is public, though every public spirit is not gracious.

As we are not born by ourselves, so we are not born for ourselves; but the beast's followers and Babylon's merchants are for themselves, and seek themselves. "Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough; and they are shepherds, which cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter," Isa. lvi. 11. "They teach things they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," Tit. i. 11. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees; for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation," Matth. xxiii. 14. These make not gain stoop to godliness, but godliness stoop to gain.

12thly, and *Lastly*, The Lamb's followers may be known from the beast's followers by this, they are more for the power than form, for heart than art, for matter than method, for substance than show; "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn aside," 2 Tim. iii. 5. As they who have the power of godliness cannot deny the form, so they who have the form of godliness should not deny the power. Alas! what is hearing without doing, and praying without practising, and teaching without reforming? God loves

to see the plants of righteousness: he beareth greater respect to our hearts, than he doth to our works. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God," Rom. xii. 1.

The formalist he is all outward actions, and for nothing of inward sincerity: he is for a body without a soul, and a show without a substance; but it is not a show of outward piety that will excuse inward hypocrisy; "for he is not a Jew, that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 28, 29. "I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan," Rev. ii. 9. They are better in their outsides, than they are in their insides: but believers are better in their insides than they are in their outsides: "The King's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 13. The one bows but his knee at the name of Jesus, the other bows his heart to the truth of Jesus: the one only signs with the cross, the other carries the cross. Oh, what would not hypocritical men do for heaven, if they might have heaven for their so doing? But they that sail in this rotten bottom, will surely sink in the ocean. "Who hath required this at

your hands to tread my courts ? To what purpose are your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord ? I am full of burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, nor of lambs, nor of he-goats.” It was not the clay and spittle that cured the blind man, but Christ anointing his eyes. It was not the troubling of the waters in the pool of Bethesda that made them whole, but the coming down of the angel. Alas ! the dish without the meat will not feed us. Men may spread the net of duty, but it is God must take the draught of mercy. Now by this, beloved, you may know the Lamb’s followers from the beast’s followers.

And thus I have briefly and clearly shewed you these five things :

First, What following the Lamb is.

Secondly, Why gracious souls follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Thirdly, The excellency of following the Lamb.

Fourthly, The misery of following the beast.

Fifthly, How the Lamb’s followers may be known from the beast’s followers.

I shall make some use of this.

First, For self-examination and trial. Oh, friends, for the Lord’s sake, and for your souls’ sake, examine yourselves, try yourselves by this, that you may know whose you are, and to whom you do belong ; “ Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey : his servants ye are to

whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness?" Rom. vi. 16.

Oh! whom do ye follow? If men, verily you have your reward: if sin, you shall have your sins' wages, which is eternal death: wo and misery in this life, and hell and destruction in the other life: but if God, then you shall have eternal life. Therefore be not deceived, mistake not yourselves, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap." Oh! beloved, examine yourselves, and try yourselves, what it is you mind, what it is you seek, what it is you do. Do you follow the Lamb in his commandments, in his teaching, in his appointments, and in his examples, and through suffering and reproaches? Have you forsaken all, and followed him? Matth. xix. 29. Have you taken up his cross and denied yourselves? Matth. xvi. 24. Have you learned of him to be meek and lowly? Matth. xi. 29. Have you visited and clothed his members? Matth. xxv. 35. Have you kissed the Son, and made your peace with him? Oh, beloved, are you new creatures? Are you in Christ? Are you in faith? "Know ye not if Christ be not in you, ye are reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

The *Second* use is exhortation.

First, Oh, beloved, let me beseech you for your precious and immortal soul's sake, to come out of Babylon from the beast's image, and from his worship, and from his mark, that you may be not defiled. Oh! come away to Jesus Christ: "Arise, my love

and come away," Cant. ii. 10. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. Oh! sinners, he calls you to come to him: will you not go? We must forsake sin, and embrace virtue; put off the old man, and put on the new man; we must have repentance and mortification, a dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness; from the love of earthly things, to the desire of heavenly things. Our bodies and our souls must come away unto Christ: our souls, because they are the spouse of Christ; our bodies, because they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. We must come away from the enticements of the flesh, and the allurements of the world, and suggestions of the devil, and from the whore of Babylon, and from all the inventions and traditions of men, Rev. xviii. 4. that we may walk with God, before God, after God, and in the name of God, and in the Spirit of God: and that we may live in Christ, as Christ lives in the Father. Oh, what more happy, than to live for ever; and so to live for ever as Christ himself liveth! Surely this is a blessed and glorious life. This is a believer's life.

Secondly, Labour more and more to be like those that follow the Lamb fully. They are very holy and pure, they are called virgins—

1st, For their chastity: "That I may present you as chaste virgins unto Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2.

These love Christ with a chaste, but not with an adulterous love.

2ndly, For their purity: They are virgin saints, they are not defiled with the whore of Babylon, but have kept themselves from her idolatry and superstition, and from her sin and wickedness: and in their mouth was found no guile.

Believers are stiled and titled heaven: Christ's members are glorious members. They are called heaven for two reasons.

First, Because there is much of heaven in them.

Secondly, Because there is much of them in heaven.

1st, There is much of heaven in believers; much of God, much of Christ, and much of the Spirit: "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. The glory of God, the knowledge of God, the presence of God, the love of God, the holiness of God, the joys of God, these are the things that make heaven to be heaven. Now there is much of those in believers, therefore they are called heaven. We are taken into communion with angels; and our communion with angels, in a great measure, doth consist in bearing part with them in praising God; it is the action of heaven: believers are holy ones, and they have glorious titles.

1. The Lord's portion, Deut. xxxii. 9.

2. His pleasant portion, Jer. xii. 10.

- 3 His inheritance, Isa. xix. 25.
4. The dearly beloved of his soul, Jer. xii. 7.
5. God's treasure, and peculiar treasure, Exod. xix. 5.
6. His glory, Isa. xlvi. 13.
7. The house of God's glory, Isa. lx. 7.
8. A crown of glory, Isa. lxii. 3.
9. A royal diadem, in the same place.
10. The glory of God, Jer. iii. 17.
11. Golden candlesticks, Rev. i. 12.
12. Kings, Rev. v. 10—And in my text heaven.

There is as much difference between the church of God and other men, as there is betwixt gold and dirt, as betwixt diamonds and bubbles, in the Lord's esteem; they are to God above all people, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Prov. xii. 26. Oh! how precious, how happy, how blessed and glorious are believers! They are called heaven.

2ndly, Believers are called heaven, because there is much of heaven in them.

1. Their thoughts are in heaven, Psal. cxxxix. 17.
2. Their desires are in heaven, Psal. lxxiii. 25.
3. Their affections are in heaven, Col. iii. 2.
4. Their hopes are in heaven, Tit. ii. 13.
5. Their conversations are in heaven, Phil. iii. 20.
6. Their hearts are in heaven, Matth. vi. 21.
7. Their alms are in heaven, Luke. x. 20.

Oh! there is much of believers in heaven; their souls are in heaven, when their bodies are walking

upon the earth; they live in heaven, whilst they are on the earth, Eph. ii. 6. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." The saints are set in heavenly places, in heavenly dignities, heavenly privileges, heavenly prerogatives. The saints of the high God are set on high places. The true church is that spouse that is fair and beautiful, Cant. ii. 14. Oh! the church of Christ is lovely and glorious.

1. Glorious in her head. 2. Glorious in her titles. 3. Glorious in her gifts and graces. 4. Glorious in her offices. 5. Glorious in her privileges. 6. Glorious in her members.

Oh, the church of Christ is a holy church, and a glorious church. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy without blemish," Eph. v. 27. "They are not defiled with women, they are virgins, and in their mouth was found no guile. Now, he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

I shall exhort you that are members of this heavenly church,

1st, To seek heavenly things, before and above all things else; let your hearts be filled with knowledge and heavenly riches.

2ndly, Delight in heavenly things: let it be your heaven upon earth, to serve the God of heaven.

3rdly, Act by heavenly principles.

4thly, Have a holy dependence upon God; for direction, for protection, for assistance, for a blessing.

5thly, Eye heavenly objects; God, Christ, and the Spirit.

6thly, Imitate heavenly ones; follow them that follow Christ.

7thly, Walk by a heavenly rule; walk according to the law of heaven.

8thly and *Lastly*, Live much in heaven.

Your Father is in heaven, your Head is in heaven, your Husband is in heaven, your King is in heaven, your treasure is in heaven, your crown is in heaven, your wages are in heaven.

And where should you be but in heaven? “Knowing in yourselves, that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,” Heb. x. 34. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” 2 Cor. v. 1.

Oh! these are blessed and holy ones. “And they that were with him, are called the chosen, and faithful,” Rev. xvii. 14. Oh! labour to be like those in purity and piety, in holiness and humbleness, in meekness and patience, in faithfulness and uprightness, in spiritualness and in all godliness.

Thirdly, Follow the Lamb out of Babylon. “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How

long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. vi. 10. "And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple, which was in heaven, he having also a sharp sickle," Rev. xiv. 15, 16, 17. The whore of Babylon shall be destroyed with a double destruction. Her walls shall fall down, her wall of power, her wall of polity, her wall of superstition, her wall of maintenance. And that for these reasons:

1st, Because she hath a corrupt religion, and that both in doctrine and worship. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she hath made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication," Rev. xiv. 8. and xviii. 3.

2ndly, Because she hath poisoned the kings of the earth. The whore of Babylon hath been the great corrupter of kings. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophets: for they are spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the

whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty," Rev. xvi. 13, 14. and xvii. 2.

3rdly, For her cruelty. "In her was found the blood of the prophets, and all the saints that were slain upon the earth," Rev. xviii. 24. "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration," chap. xvii. 6.

4thly, Because her ruin and destruction is published and proclaimed over the world; "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils," chap. xviii. 2. and xiv. 8.

5thly, This is the great design that Christ hath in the latter days of the world, to destroy Antichrist: "The Lamb shall overcome them, for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings," chap. xvii. 14. "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he was clothed in a vesture dipt in blood, and his name was called the Word of God; and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations," chap. xix. 12, 13, 15.

6thly, Because he hath greatly insulted and triumphed over the Lord's people in their miseries and calamities: "And they that dwell on the earth

shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and send gifts to one another," Rev. xi. 10.

7thly, Because of all the church's enemies that ever were, this is the cruelest enemy; the fourth beast is worse than any of the former beasts. ' And behold a fourth beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth, and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it," Dan. vii. 7. Rev. xviii. 14.

8thly, It is the expectation of all the saints, that Babylon is to be destroyed, and thrown like a millstone into the sea, chap. xviii. 21. Now, that God hath raised this expectation in the hearts of his people, he will not frustrate their expectation, he will fulfil their petition.

9thly, God hath promised to destroy the scarlet whore, because she hath destroyed his saints, and she is to be rewarded as she hath rewarded others, chap. xv. 5. and xviii. 8.

10thly, The whore of Babylon shall be destroyed, because she trusted in the arm of flesh, and gloried in her strength and riches. " How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she hath said in her heart, I sit a queen, I am no widow, and I shall see no sorrow; therefore her plagues shall come," chap. xviii. 7, 8. Now, beloved, consider this, and think of this, and keep yourselves from Babylon, that ye do not partake of her sins, lest ye receive

of her plagues. Oh, poor sinners ! if you have any love to your souls, if you have any mind to be saved, follow the Lamb, that you may be saved by the Lamb.

He leads poor souls from darkness to light. From death to life. From vice to virtue. From poverty to plenty. From sorrow to joy. From misery to glory. From Satan to God. From an earthly kingdom to an heavenly kingdom.

“Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom,” Matth. xxv. 24.

Oh ! the kingdom which Christ leads poor souls to is, 1. A rich kingdom. 2. A peaceable kingdom. 3. A righteous kingdom. 4. A blessed kingdom. 5. A glorious kingdom. 6. A satisfying kingdom. 7. An universal kingdom. 8. An everlasting kingdom.

Oh ! follow the Lamb, follow the Lamb, that you may be ever glorified with the Lamb, and by the Lamb.

CHRIST'S VOICE TO LONDON;

OR,

A CALL TO SINNERS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

SEVERAL SERMONS,

Preached in the City in the time of the sad Visitation.



THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

COURTEOUS READER,

I HAVE had little encouragement from the world to appear any more in this nature, who have had so many books taken and kept from me, without any just cause, though there was nothing in them but what was profitable matter for the church of God; yet for all this, they are kept from me still. But, kind Reader, this is not all which I have suffered; as soon as my books came forth, several men made a prize of them, by printing them over divers times without my knowledge, with many gross mistakes and abuses, which was not a little trouble to me, to see the author and the buyer both abused. Kind Reader, I hope these sermons will find as good acceptance with thee, as the former: I confess this encouraged me, when I considered how my former treatises were received and embraced by the Lord's

people in all parts of this kingdom, as appears by many thousands of them which have been printed and sold; and though I have met with many discouragements from them without, and some also which are within, who have bent their tongues like a bow, for lies, as if I had done that which was never in my thoughts, nor in my heart, much less in practice: and though they had as little cause to report it of me, as of any man, yet how confidently did some report, and others believe, those abominable lies, as if I had lost my first love, and was returning again to Egypt! Oh! what is it that prejudice and malice will not do? But why should I be troubled at this, seeing it was so with the holy apostle, who went through evil report as well as good? But in this I rejoice, that the Lord hath made me any way instrumental in doing good, and in that he has kept me close to himself, and this is my crown and rejoicing. Now, that the only wise God may keep thee and me by his power through faith unto salvation, that we may glorify him here, and reign with him hereafter, is the desire and prayer of him who desires the good of thy soul.

WILLIAM DYER.

CHRIST'S VOICE TO LONDON.

Rev. III. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*

THE Holy Scriptures are the mysteries of God, Christ is the mystery of the scriptures, grace is the mystery of Christ, 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Lord Jesus is our life, and the way to life, 1 Cor. ii. 7. To know him savingly, believingly, and experimentally, is life eternal, John xvii. 3. "I am the way," saith Christ, John xiv. 6.

The old and good way, Jer. vi. 16.

The new and living way, Heb. x. 20.

The strait and narrow way, Matth. vii. 24.

And because poor sinners are by nature the children of wrath, and all gone out of the way, "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18; and become "wretched and miserable, poor and blind, and naked," like to the Laodiceans, spoken of in this chap. ver. 10; therefore the Lord Jesus, who is full of love, full of grace, and full of pity to poor lost sinners, doth graciously

invite them to come to him, that he may "enrich them with gold, and clothe them with white raiment, and anoint their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see," ver. 18. And further, to shew his willingness and readiness to save souls, he tells us in the text, that he stands at the door and knocks, that "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

In these words you have three general parts.

1. God's gracious offer to man, "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

2. Man's duty in relation to God's gracious offer "If any man hear my voice, and open the door."

3. God's gracious promise in relation to man's duty, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

These words being thus opened, there flows from them four points of doctrine.

DOCT. I. There is a marvellous willingness in the heart of God and Christ, to save and receive poor lost sinners.

DOCT. II. That the hearts of poor sinners are barred and bolted against the Lord Jesus.

DOCT. III. That it is the duty and great concernment of all men whatsoever, to hear God's voice, and to open the door.

DOCT. IV. That whoever will but hear Christ's voice, and open the door, he will come in to them, and sup with them, and they with him.

Neither time nor strength, beloved, will give me leave to handle all these doctrines apart ; therefore I shall insist but upon one of them, which is the second, ‘That the hearts of poor sinners are barred and bolted against the Lord Jesus.’

In the prosecution of this point, I shall do two things.

1. Open it, that you may see it.
2. Prove it, that you may believe it.

First, In the opening of it, there are three things to be explained.

1. The bars. 2. The voice. 3. The doors.

1st, I will shew you what the bars are, that bolt the doors of sinners hearts against Christ.

Beloved, they are six.

1. The bar of ignorance.
2. The bar of unbelief.
3. The bar of self-conceitedness.
4. The bar of earthly-mindedness.
5. The bar of prejudice.
6. The bar of hardness of heart.

These, my beloved, are the cursed bars which bar God and Christ and the Holy Spirit out of the heart.

I shall begin first with the bar of ignorance, and in that I shall shew you these three things.

1. What ignorance is.
2. What sinners are ignorant of.
3. The mischievousness of this sin of ignorance.

And, *First*, What ignorance is. Ignorance is the want of knowledge, or darkness of the understand-

ing; for, said the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

Here you may see what ignorance is; the apostle calls it darkness and blindness: so likewise in 2 Cor. xiii. 3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So that ignorance is darkness of mind, blindness of heart, and want of knowledge and spiritual understanding in the soul.

Secondly, What are sinners ignorant of?

Answ. 1. They are ignorant of God, they are ignorant of Christ, they are ignorant of the Spirit, they are ignorant of the word, they are ignorant of their own misery, they are ignorant of the necessity of a change, of being born again, of being new creatures, of being converted, and turned from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan to the living God: such things as these, I say they are ignorant of: and this is that which keeps poor souls from going to Christ. Oh, beloved, we have many of those amongst us who are ignorant. It was said of the priests, the sons of Eli, that they were sons of Belial, and knew not the Lord, 1 Sam. xviii. So in the prophecies of Jeremiah, (chap. ii. 8.) it is said "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the

law knew me not." So the Pharisees were blind leaders of the blind, Matth. xv. 14. Would to God there were no such among our priests this day. May not that charge be drawn up against us now, as it was against Israel, Hos. iv. 1—6. "Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land, by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood; therefore the land mourneth, and my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou be no more a priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children; they eat up the sins of my people, and set their hearts on their iniquity; and they are like people, like priest." 'Thus men err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, Matth. xxii. 29.

Thirdly, The mischievousness of this sin of ignorance.

1. Ignorance is that which keeps men from knowing God.

2. Ignorance is that which keeps men from pleasing God.

3. Ignorance is that which keeps men from coming to God.

4. Ignorance hinders men from having a property in God.

5. Ignorance is that which hardens the heart against God. Oh, cursed and mischievous igno-

rance ! What sin is like unto this ? This is that which darkens, which hardens, which binds, and bars the doors of sinners' hearts against Christ. "Oh, that thou hadst known," saith our dear Lord, "the things that belong to thy peace," Luke xix. 42. But because they are "a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will have no mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11. Thus, my beloved, I have shewed you what a wretched and miserable state such are in, that are thus ignorant.

The second bar is unbelief, which bolts and bars Christ out of the heart. This is that which makes men,

1. That they give no credit to the report of the gospel.

2. Neither do they yield that lovely and loyal subjection to Christ, as their Lord, where unbelief is.

3. Where unbelief is, it keeps off the heart from confidently believing on Christ, for that which is to be had in him, and so keeps out the love of our souls : it is that which clips the wings of his mercy, Heb. iii. *ult.* It is that which holds the hand of his power, Matth. xiii. 58. "And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." It is that which lets the soul into perdition, John viii. 28. Rev. xxi. 8. "The unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake of fire, which is the second death." Unbelief is that which hardeneth the heart, and causeth it to depart from God, Heb. iii. 12, 13.

‘Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened.’ Oh, beloved, unbelief also is that which gives God the lie: “He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son,” 1 John v. 10. They believe not his promise, fear not his threatenings, nor hearken to the voice of his word: though he sets life and death before them, heaven and hell, bitter and sweet, yet they go on in the imagination of their hearts, to add sin to sin, putting the evil day far away; but draw iniquity with the cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart-rope. Oh, beloved, this is the state and condition of unbelievers, this is one of the bars that bolts Christ out of the heart; as all believers are in a state of salvation, so all unbelievers are in a state of damnation; “For he that believeth not is condemned already,” John iii. 18.

First, A self-conceited man is one who supposes himself to be what he is not. Gal. vi. 3. “If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

Secondly, A self-conceited man is one that glorieth in his works, and despiseth others, Luke xviii. 9—14. “And he spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. The Pharisee stood and prayed

thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. But the publican, whom he despised, went away rather justified: "For every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased."

Thirdly, A self-conceited man is the farthest from heaven of any man; "Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you," saith our Saviour to the self-conceited Pharisee, Matth. xxi. 3.

Fourthly, A self-conceited man is one that liveth the most secure in a state of sin and misery. "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," Dent. xxix. 19.

Fifthly, A self-conceited man is the hardest to be wrought upon, and convinced of the state and condition that he is in of any man; because he thinks himself righteous and holy enough, and good and sound enough. Thus it was with the scribes and pharisees, who had such high thoughts of themselves, that they thought themselves to be the most holy persons in the world: mark what Christ saith to them, Matth. ix. 12. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So also it is said, John vii. 48. "Have any of the rulers,

or of the Pharisees, believed on him?" Note, These were very hard to be convinced and brought to own the truth.

Sixthly, A self-conceited man is one that thinks that God is made up of nothing but mercy, and therefore lives in his sins, and 'pleaseth himself with this, that God is merciful; he lieth still in the ditch of sin, and crieth, God help, but never endeavour-eth to come out: but though the Lord waiteth to be gracious, yet the Lord is a God of judgment, Isa. xxx. 18. Oh, this is a sad and miserable condition of a self-conceited man, this is that which keeps him from closing with Christ; this is that cursed bar that bolts the door of sinners' hearts against Christ.

The fourth bar is earthly-mindedness.

First, An earthly-minded man, is one that minds the things of this world more than he doth Jesus Christ; this was the case of the young man in the gospel, who came to Christ, and asked him, saying, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus bids him keep the commandments; he said unto him, "All these have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" Jesus saith unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." But he being an earthly-minded man, would not embrace the counsel of Christ, but went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions, Matth. xix. 20, 21, 22.

Secondly, An earthly-minded man, is one that will leave the work of God, to embrace this present world: this was Paul's complaint to Demas, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." So also in Phil. ii. 21. he saith, "That all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

Thirdly, An earthly-minded man is one that will preach false doctrine, for the love of money, and filthy lucre's sake. 1 Tim. iv. 10. "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith." Tit. i. 10, 11. "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, which teach things they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." 2 Pet. ii. 15. "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Oh, beloved! I could wish that this were not too much practised in this our day: but, alas! what shall I say? such is the earthly-mindedness of many of the priests, that I may say of them, as the blessed apostle Paul of some in his day, Phil. iii. 19. "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things."

Fourthly, An earthly-minded man is one that trusteth in his riches, and not in God: Prov. xi. 28. "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall." Psal. xlix. 6, 7. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Therefore, "if riches do increase, set not thine heart upon them," Psal. lxxii. 10. The blessed apostle Paul doth charge them that are rich in this world, "That they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy," 1 Tim. vi. 17. Thus you may see, my beloved, that whosoever trusteth in uncertain riches more than in God, is an earthly-minded man: it is that which bars men out of the kingdom of heaven: it is the word of Christ to his disciples, Mark x. 24, 25. "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Oh, beloved, it is a snare, it is idolatry, Col. iii. 5. And covetousness, which is idolatry, is the root of all evil, 1 Tim. vi. 10. "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Thus earthly-mindedness, or covetousness, is another great sin which keeps souls from going to Christ for life and salvation: "And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought three yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," Luke xiv 18, 19, 20.

The fifth bar is prejudice, which bars Christ out of the heart. Wicked and sinful men have a great prejudice against Christ; that is, against these three things of Christ.

First, They have a prejudice against his doctrine, or worship. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying, who can bear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him," John vi. 60, 66. "And they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?" Matth. xx. 10. Sinners have a great prejudice against the doctrine and worship of Christ; they think it too pure, too spiritual, and too powerful for them to hear.

Secondly, They have a great prejudice against the ministers or ambassadors of Christ; they say of them as Ahab said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he never prophecies good of me," 1 Kings xxii. 8. So in 1 Kings xviii. 17. Ahab said unto Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" So Jeremiah complains of this, saying, "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily," Jer. xx. 7, 8. So in Acts xxiv. 5. it is so of Paul, "For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews, throughout all the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes;" and this is according to the word of our blessed Lord, Matth. x. 22.

“And ye shall be hated of all men, for my name’s sake.”

Thirdly, Sinners have a great prejudice against the members of Christ, and that for four reasons :

1. Because they are poor; Luke xii. 22, 23. 1 Cor. i. 26—30. Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that are poor?

2. Because they are but few; Luke xii. 32. Matth. vii. 14. Deut. vii. 7. “For ye were the fewest of all people.” Rev. iii. 4. “Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.”

3. Because they are unlearned in the account of men; this is said of Christ, John vii. 15. “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” Also of Peter and John it is said, Acts iv. 13 “And when they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” “Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed,” John vii. 47, 48, 49.

4. Because they will not conform to men’s inventions. See 2 Chron. xi. 13—16. “And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to Rehoboam, out of all their coasts: for they left their suburbs, and their possessions, and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the

priest's office before the Lord. And after them out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers." See Dan. iii. 18. "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image that thou hast set up." Also in Matth. xv. 2. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But Jesus said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?" See also Acts v. 28, 29. "Did not I strictly command you, that you should not teach in this name? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." See also Col. ii. 21, 22. "Touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men." Oh, my dear brethren, this cursed prejudice is that which keeps sinners from receiving of the truth in the love of it, and a bar which bolts Christ out of the heart.

The sixth bar is hardness of heart, which bolts the heart of sinners against Christ: and they are hardened,

1. Against God, Job ix. 4. "Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?"

2. Their hearts are hardened against his mercy,

that it doth not draw them : Rom. ii. 4, 5. " Or despiseth thou the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

3. Their hearts are hardened against his judgments, that they do not tremble at them ; as it is said, *Exod. viii. 32.* " And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." As it is also said, *Jer. v. 22.* " Fear ye not me? saith the Lord. And will ye not tremble at my presence?"

4. Their hearts are hardened against his word, that it doth not reform them : *Prov. xxix. 1.* " He that being often reprov'd, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee," *Psal. l. 17.* See in *Jer. xlv. 16, 17.* " As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee ; but we will certainly do whatsoever cometh out of our own mouth."

5. Their hearts are hardened against the Spirit of God, that it doth not melt them : *Gen. vi. 3.* " My Spirit shall not always strive with man." As Stephen said to the Jews, *Acts vii. 51.* " Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,

ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye."

6. Their hearts are hardened against all the means of grace, or gracious invitations from the people of God : " But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped the ear, and made the heart like an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of Hosts sent to them by his Spirit in the former prophets," Zech. vii. 11, 12. " They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken unto the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely," Psal. lvi. 4, 5. Oh, dear friends ! this is another bar which bolts Christ out of the hearts of poor sinners. Thus beloved, I have shewed you what the bars are that bolt the doors of our hearts against Christ, that we do not hear his voice and open the door.

2dly, The second thing which is here to be explained, is, what this voice is, which sinners are to hear. It is the voice of Christ, he is speaking to poor sinners, to open the door of their hearts, that he may come in and sup with them.

There are two sort of voices by which Christ speaketh to the soul ; inward voices and outward voices.

First, Inward voices.—1. Their voice of conscience. The Lord Jesus speaks to sinners by their consciences. It is said of the Jews, (John viii. 9.)

they were convicted by their own consciences : so Paul saith, Rom. ix. 1. “ My conscience beareth me witness.” And of the Gentiles Paul saith, (Rom. ii. 15.) that they did by nature the things contained in the law, their conscience also bearing them witness : and as Paul saith, 2 Cor. i. 12. “ Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.” Oh, friends ! God preacheth to you many times by your consciences, which speaketh to you secretly and powerfully, condemning and reproving you for iniquities. Oh ! therefore, hear the voice of conscience, for it is the voice of Christ : hear, I say, and hearken to it, and let Christ in, that he may sup with you.

2. Christ speaks to us by the voice of his Spirit, as he did to the old world, Gen. vi. 3. “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” And as he did to the Jews, Acts vii. 51. “ Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye.” So in John xvi. 8. Christ tells us, that the Spirit should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Oh, the ever blessed God speaks to the world by his blessed Spirit, striving with them, convincing of them, and reproving of them for their iniquities, that their souls may believe in him, and live with him to all eternity !

Secondly, There are outward voices by which Christ speaks to sinners. 1. By the voice of his word, which is the preaching of the gospel ; that is, the word of reconciliation. Oh, sinner ! when thou

hearest the word read, thou hearest the voice of Christ: Col. i. 5. "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;" as Christ saith, John v. 39. "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." The voice of the Scriptures is the voice of Christ; and as Christ speaks to us by them here, so he will judge by them hereafter: Rom. ii. 16. "God will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus, according to my gospel." See John xii. 48. where Christ saith, "The word which I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

2. Christ speaks to sinners by the voice of his rod, by afflictions, and tribulations, and judgments, Mic. vi. 9. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

3. Christ speaks to sinners by the voice of his servants, as in Isa. l. 10. "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant?" So in 2 Cor. v. 20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." So in Matth. xviii. "He that heareth you, heareth me." Oh, sinner! Christ speaks to you by the voice of his servants, by his ministers and members, who beseech you, and entreat you to be reconciled, that you may have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Having thus briefly shewed you what the voices are,

3dly. I shall in the *third* place, come to shew you what the door is that Christ stands and knocks at, which sinners are to open and let him in.

1. The *first* door which sinners should open unto Christ, is the door of their thoughts. I say, we must open the door of our thoughts to him, that God may be in our thoughts, and Christ in our thoughts, and the Spirit of life and power in our thoughts, and eternity in our thoughts, heaven and judgment in our thoughts: "Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart," 1 Chron., xxix. 18. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them! Psal. cxxxix. 17. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul," Psal. xix. 29. Oh! this is the first door of our hearts which believers open to their beloved Lord.

2. The *second* is the door of consideration, which sinners should open to Christ: "Oh, that they were wise, and understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. xxxii. 29. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isa. i. 3. "The tabret, and pipe, and harp, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands," Isa. v. 12. But now,

those that have opened this door to Christ, they consider their ways : “ The upright considereth his ways,” Prov. xxi. 29. And the wondrous works of God, Job xxxvii. 14. And what great things God hath done for him, 1 Sam. xiii. 24. “ Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways,” Hag. i. 5. And this is the second door of the heart.

3. The *third* door is the door of affection, which sinners should open to Christ : “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,” Deut. vi. 5. “ If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,” 1 Cor. xvi. 22. “ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in truth and sincerity,” Eph. vi. 24. “ Set your affections on things above, and not on things beneath,” Col. iii. 2. This door of love and affection must be opened to Christ, that he may come into your hearts, and be your nearest and dearest, your joy and delight, that you may have reconciliation with the Father, union with the Son, and communion with the Holy Ghost. And this is the third door of the heart.

4. The *fourth* is the door of desire, which must be opened to Christ, or else he cannot come into our hearts, and sup with us. Oh, sinners ! you must desire and thirst after Christ vehemently, and say, as the church doth in the last of the Canticles. “ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of

spices :” So in Rev. xxii. 20. “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” So with the Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 25. “ Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth to be desired besides thee.” And with the church, Isa. xxvi. 9. “ With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early; for the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.” So with Paul, “ I desire to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 2. This is the fourth door of the heart which you must open to Christ, without which there is no supping with him, nor he with you.

5. The *fifth* is the door of estimation, which sinners must open to Christ; that is, to prize him, and to value him as more precious than all other things besides. So do believers, 1 Pet. ii. 7. “ Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious;” and, with Paul, “ do count all things but dung and dirt to gain him :” and, also with Moses, “ to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt,” Heb. xi. 26. Oh! these blessed souls that have opened this door to Christ, he is to them all lovely, the chief among ten thousand; yea, he is better than rubies, “ and all things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto him,” Prov. iii. 15. So it must be with you, poor souls, you must look upon Christ as most lovely, most precious, most desirable, and most glorious: thus he

is to the Father, to the holy angels, and to the saints. And this is the fifth door of the heart.

6. The *sixth* is the door of a good conversation, which sinners as well as saints must open to Christ: "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 20. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2 Pet. iii. 11. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." Phil. i. 27. "And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." This is the sixth door of the heart, to wit, a good conversation; this also must be opened to Christ, that he may come in, and sup with us, and we with him, that our souls may have fellowship and communion with him.

And thus I have briefly shewed you, beloved, what the doors are that must be opened to Christ. Now, having done with the explanation, I come to the application of the point: and as I have opened it unto you, that you might see it; and proved it unto you, that you might believe it; I shall now apply it, that you may receive it

Is it so, beloved, that the hearts of sinners are thus barred and bolted against the Lord Jesus?

USE I. *First*, By way of information. This may be of use to inform us of the sad and miserable condition of all unconverted persons: they “are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” they are “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Eph: ii. 12. Oh, sinners, this is your condition, who are graceless and christless persons. And though this be sad, yet this is not all; for your hearts are barred and bolted against the Lord of life and glory. Oh, thou that hearest or readest this, how canst thou but tremble to think that thy heart should be thus barred and bolted against Jesus Christ, with ignorance, with unbelief, self-conceitedness, earthly-mindedness, prejudice, and hardness of heart? and yet all this while open to sin, to Satan, and the world, which are cruel enemies to the soul. That I may hasten you out of this condition, if it be the will of God, as the angel did Lot out of Sodom, (Gen. xix.) I shall turn my discourse into an exhortation.

USE II. And first of all, Let me exhort you whose hearts are thus barred and bolted against Jesus Christ, to hear his voice, and open the door.

First, To hear his voice. Oh, sinners, Christ speaks to you by your consciences, by his Spirit, by his word, by his rod, and by his servants. Oh,

you men and women of this city, 'God hath spoken to you by all these voices, but you have turned the deaf ear to Christ; "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. Oh, London, London! God speaks to thee by his judgments, and because thou wouldst not hear the voice of his word, he hath made thee to feel the stroke of his rod. Oh, great city! how hath the plague broke in upon thee, because of thy abominations! "Thus they provoked him with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them," Psal. cvi. 29. Oh, you of this city! how is the wrath of God kindled against you, that such multitudes of thousands are fallen within thy borders, by the noisome pestilence, God's immediate sword! London! how are thy streets thinned, thy widows increased, and thy burying places filled, thy inhabitants fled, thy trade decayed! Oh! therefore lay to heart, you that are yet alive, all these things, and turn from your wicked ways, that the cry of your prayers may outcry the cry of your sins, and be like the city of Nineveh, who believed God, and gave credit to Jonas' word, who humbled themselves, and fasted, and cried mightily unto the Lord, Jonah iii. 5. Oh, let not the heathen outstrip Christians! Did Nineveh repent and turn from their wicked ways, and shall not London? May be you may think, my brethren, that all is well now, and that God is friends with you, be-

cause the sickness decreaseth and abateth ; I say, blessed be God for it : but be not deceived, God is not mocked ; to whomsoever God bestows great mercies, if they abound in great wickedness, he will inflict great punishments upon them. Alas ! beloved, do your sins decrease, and doth that abate ? Is there a turning from sin, and a turning to God ? Is there a reformation and amendment of life among you ? If this be so, then you may hope that God hath done afflicting of you : “ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wickedness, then will I forgive their sins, and heal their land,” 2 Chron. vii. 14. But if you remain still as profane as before, as superstitious as before, as carnal as before, as lukewarm as before, as hard hearted and as cruel as before, as proud and vain as before ; I say, if it be thus with you, God hath not yet done with London, but hath other judgments to pour out upon you, though he cause this to cease. Do but see how God dealt with the Jews in this case, Amos iv. 6. to 13. “ I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places ; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have also withholden the rain from you ; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew ; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord : I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt ; your

young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord: I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as fire-brands plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Therefore, my dear brethren, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, and for your soul's sake, hear his voice, that you may be prosperous on earth, and glorious in heaven.

2ndly, Let me exhort you, and oh that I could prevail with you, to persuade you of this city to three things:

1. That you would thoroughly turn from your evil ways, and amend your doings, that God may repent him of the evil, which otherwise he may bring upon you. Oh, see what the Lord saith, Jer. xxvi. 3. "If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to do unto them, because of their doings." See ver. 13. "Therefore now, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath purposed against you. Also mark what the Lord speaketh by the prophet, Jer. vii. 3. "Thus saith the Lord

of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place," (ver. 5.) "if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings." Oh, beloved the Lord our God is willing to heal, willing to hear, and willing to forgive. Great cities are places which are usually guilty of great sins, great provocations, and great abominations: and for this cause God hath destroyed and overthrown many cities, as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. xix. 24. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven." Also Admah and Zeboim, Hos. xi. 8. "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim?" So Jerusalem and other cities were destroyed by God for their sins and wickedness, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. Jer. lii. 12—14. Now, see what the apostle Peter saith to this, 2 Pet. ii. 6. "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly." O London! repent, that it may not be so with thee. O ye people! rent your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord, who is willing to receive you, that so his judgments may be diverted, your former mercies restored, and his blessing poured down upon you.

2. That you would dearly love, and highly prize the precious saints of the most high God which are among you. These are they of whom

the world is not worthy, Heb. xi. 38. God prizes them as his jewels and treasures, Mal. iii. 17. Exod. xix. 5. God calls them the dearly beloved of his soul, Jer. xii. 7. "They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Oh! therefore "he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes," Psal. cv. 14. Oh, beloved, nations, and cities, and kings, are blessed for their sakes: See Gen. xii. 2, 3. "And thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee." O London! in this thou art happy; yea, more happy than any one city upon the face of the earth, that I know or have heard of, because thou hast within thy borders, more righteous, more saints, more true believers, who are still sighing and mourning for thy sins, praying for thy peace, and seeking and desiring thy eternal good.

3. And *lastly*, Let me exhort you to open the door and let Christ in, into your thoughts, into your minds, into your affections, into your desires, into your estimations, and into your conversations. Oh, beloved, keep Christ out no longer, but let him into your hearts and souls, that he may make you rich, rich in faith, rich in knowledge, rich in assurances, rich in privileges, rich in experience, and rich in good works.

Oh, therefore, let not sin be let in, and Christ shut out. Oh, let Jesus Christ into your hearts;

for if you shut the door against Christ, he will shut the door against you.

First, The door of mercy.

Secondly, The door of acceptance.

Thirdly, The door of salvation.

First, The door of mercy will be shut against you. Such whom Christ calls to, and they will not hear, they shall call, but Christ will not hear, Prov. i. 24. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. (ver. 28.) then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." "Mine eye shall not spare, neither shall I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." Ezek. viii. 18. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring evil upon them which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them," Jer. xi. 11. "Because they have behaved themselves ill in their doings," Mic. iii. 4. Thus, my beloved, you see how the door of God's mercy will be shut against you, if you shut the door of your hearts against Christ.

Secondly, The door of acceptance will be shut against you, if you shut the door of your hearts against Christ: "Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, therefore the Lord doth not accept them. When they fast, I will not hear their cry, and when they offer

burnt-offerings and oblations, I will not accept them," Jer. xiv. 10, 12. "To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me," Jer. vi. 20. "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies: and though ye offer me offerings, I will not accept them," Amos v. 21, 22. Oh! beloved, those that will not accept of Christ, shall not be accepted in Christ, "who hath made us accepted in the beloved," Eph. i. 6.

Thirdly, The door of salvation will be shut against you, if you shut the door of your hearts against Christ: "He that made you will not save you, and ye that formed you will shew you no favour." But as ye have refused to open the door of your hearts to your Saviour, so will he refuse to own you as his people, and to open the door of salvation for you. See the words of our blessed Lord himself, Luke xiii. 25, 26, 28. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are; Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God,

and you yourselves thrust out." Consider what hath been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.



THE GREAT DAY OF GOD'S WRATH.

REV. VI. 17. *For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand.*

EVERY man's thoughts run now like Nebuchadnezzar's, with a desire to know what shall come to pass hereafter, or what things time will bring forth, Dan. ii. 29. There is nothing in the womb of time, but what was first in the womb of God. Now, this book of the Revelation shews us these three things: 1. The state and condition of the true church of God upon earth, under the power and reign of antichrist. 2. The rise, the reign, and the rage of antichrist in the world. 3. The quiet, blessed, and glorious state and condition of the true church here below, after the ruin and downfall of antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 8. "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming;" this is declared in heaven, and declared on earth.

1. This chapter out of which my text is taken, shews us seven things: 1. You may see what God's dreadful judgments are, by which he cuts off and destroys the inhabitants of the earth, for their sin and

wickedness; they are likened and compared to horses, as you may see from verse 4. to verse 8. Here you have a red horse, the sword; a black horse, the famine; a pale horse, the pestilence, or plague, which leads to death. Horses are creatures which run to and fro, and so do God's judgments from house to house, from street to street, from city to city, from town to town, and from one place to another: "And the Lord said, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity, Ezek. ix. 5. So Jer. v. 1, 2, 4. Horses are creatures which are very swift in their motion, they run many miles in a little time; and therefore men ride them post: God's judgments are also very swift, they do much execution in a little time: "So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba, seventy thousand men," 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. 1 Chron. xxi. 14. You may also see a proof of this, by what God hath done to London, when there fell of the people above a thousand in one day.

2. Ye may see here where all the holy martyrs and witnesses of Jesus Christ are, who have been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus; they are under the altar, (ver. 9.) that is, under the glorious protection of Christ in heaven: "They are before the throne of God, serving him day and night; and the Lamb leads them to the living

fountain, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 15, 17.

3. You may see also the cause for which these blessed saints were slain; it was "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." chap. vi. 9.

4. Here you may see that all the saints' precious blood, which hath been spilt from time to time by the whore of Babylon, crieth aloud, day and night, to God for vengeance upon Babylon, chap. vi. 10.

5. You have here the answer of God in relation to the saints' cry: "And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled," chap. vi. 11.

6. You may here see what dreadful and terrible things followed upon the opening the sixth seal, ver. 12—14. "And lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." These are the visible judgments of God which are come upon the antichristian crew.

And, *lastly*, This chapter shews us what will be the state and condition of those men at that day, who are found enemies to God and his people, ver. 15

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;” (verse 16.) “and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Now this brings me to the words of my text, which shews us the reason of this great out-cry: “For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

The words of my text contain two things: A reason and a question. 1. The former part is the ground or reason of this out-cry here made by the kings and great men of the earth, together with every bond man and every free man: “For the great day of his wrath is come.” 2. The latter part is a question proposed about standing at that day: “And who shall be able to stand?”

The point of doctrine, which I shall lay down from these words, is this:

DOCT. That the greatest part of men and women will not be able to stand in the great day of God's wrath.

In handling of this point, I shall shew you four things: 1. There are some days greater than others. 2. The nature and property of this great day. And 3. Who they are that will not be able to stand in the day of God's wrath. 4. The use and application.

In the *first* place I shall shew you, beloved, that there are some great days spoken of in the Scripture; Jer. xxx. 7. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's troubles, but he shall be saved out of it."

The second great day you have in Hosea i. 11. "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel."

The third great day you have in Joel ii. 31. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

The fourth great day you have in Mal. iv. 5. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

The fifth great day is this in my text, "For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

The sixth great day you have in Rev. xvi. 14. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

The seventh and last great day you have in the Epistle of Jude, ver. 6. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

Thus, beloved, you see, that there are some days greater than others, which the Scripture calls great days, because of the greatness of the work which God doth, and will do, in those days.

2. I shall now shew you the nature and property of this great day in my text, which is called "The great day of God's wrath." Oh, my brethren ! this will be a very dreadful and terrible day to the wicked, who call evil good, and good evil : who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, and put far from them the evil day, which is now hastening upon them.

First of all, this day will be a day of astonishment to the wicked and ungodly, as it is said, Deut. xxviii. 28. "The Lord shall smite them with madness and blindness, and astonishment of heart." Oh, it will be with the wicked, as it was with Nebuchadnezzar, (Dan. iii. 24, 25.) who was astonished to behold the works and wonders of God which the Lord wrought for the deliverance of those that put their trust in him : "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire : they answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." • Oh, sinners ! do but see here how this proud Nebuchadnezzar was

astonished at the beholding of this sight: here are three things that did astonish this great king.

First, To see the fire, whose nature is to burn and consume, to have no power to seize upon the bodies of these men. Fire is one of the cruellest creatures: it is a merciless creature, and therefore the torments of hell are set forth by fire, Matth. xxv. 41. "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

The *Second* thing which did astonish Nebuchadnezzar, was, to see the servants of the Lord walking in the fiery furnace: "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire." These were cast in bound, but now they are loose; now, that the fire should have power on their bonds, and not on their bodies, oh, this caused astonishment in Nebuchadnezzar.

The *Third* thing that did astonish him, was, to see their number not decreased, but increased: "Did not we cast in three men bound into the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire: and the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God." Now this did astonish this great king. Now, as it was with Nebuchadnezzar here, so will it be with the wicked in this great day. Oh, you that speak now proudly, look highly, and walk contemptuously, it will astonish you to see God's judgments poured out upon you, and his wrath wax hot against you,

till there be no remedy. Oh, do but see that text, Jer. li. 37. "And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing without an inhabitant." Thus it will be with the ungodly at that day.

2. It will be a day of terror to those that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Christ: the terror of God will be upon such, as it was upon those cities, Gen. xxxv. 5. Oh, ye graceless persons that now fear not God, nor tremble at his word, he will make you then tremble, as he did Belshazzar, when he beheld the hand-writing, Dan. v. 6. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Oh, ye drunkards and swearers, you that despise reproof, and hate instruction, and set at nought all God's counsel; know this, that the day of God's wrath will be a day of terror to you, which will make your hearts to sink within you, your countenance to change, your joints to be loosed, and your ears to tingle, when the terrors of the Almighty God set themselves in array against you. Therefore, saith the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 11. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

3. This day of God's wrath will be a day of distress to the wicked, "When your fear shall come as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you,"

Prov. i. 27. So see that in Zeph. i. 15, 17, 18. "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung; neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath." Oh, the distress that ungodly men will be in, in that day, which will make them cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. The God of heaven will bring distress upon all sorts of men, which shall be found ungodly, and their honour shall not deliver them, nor their gold deliver them, nor their silver deliver them, nor the greatness of their multitudes deliver them, but distress will come upon them, as it did upon Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. "And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me neither by prophets, nor by dreams." See Luke xxi. 23. "And there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." Can you hear this, and not tremble at it, oh ye that are profane?

Fourthly, This day of God's wrath will be a

day of great contempt to the ungodly: "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth," Isa. xxiii. 9.

Oh, the enemies of the Lord, and such as oppose his truth, will be then hissed at. Oh, do but see that place, Jer li. 37. "And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant." The Lord will pour contempt upon all sorts of men, which have sided with the whore of Babylon, and drunk of her cup; they will not know whither to go, nor where to hide their heads, but every one will hiss at them, and have them in derision, saying, These are they who said, "It is in vain to serve the Lord; and what profit is there in keeping of his ordinances, and in walking mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" who counted saints sots, and godliness to be madness, therefore will they be contemptible before the Lord, angels, and good men. Oh, think of this, you that speak proudly and blasphemously against God, and his people; know assuredly, that God will speak to you in his wrath, and vex you in his sore displeasure, "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have you in derision," Psal. ii. 4.

Fifthly, This day of God's wrath will be a day of great destruction: "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their

tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath," Job xxi. 29, 30. In this day the Lord will destroy both evil persons, and evil things, men and their idols, men and their inventions. Every plant which is not of God's planting, shall be plucked up; "and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and the idols he shall utterly abolish in that day;—a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they have made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats, to go into the cliffs of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth," Isa. ii. 17—21. All false ways false worship, and false doctrines, shall fall in that day; this will be a reaping day; God will empty the earth, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, chap. xxiv. 1—3. "Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof; and it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with the master; as with the maid, so with the mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him: the land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this

word." So Joel iii. 13, 14. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." So in Rev. xiv. 15. the angels are appointed to reap down the earth. Oh, let every one that hears or reads these sayings, let them hear and fear, and tremble at them! for this will be a day of great destruction to the wicked and ungodly.

6thly, and Lastly, This will be a great day of wrath, as it is said in the words of my text, "For the great day of his wrath is come." But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire. Oh, beloved! this is not the day of man's wrath. Men have had their day of reigning and raging, and lording over God's people, but that is over and gone, and now God's day is come, and this is the day of his wrath; and woe to the earth, and woe to the sea, and woe to the whore of Babylon, for the hour of her judgment is come. Oh, beloved! God's wrath will be very terrible to the wicked: 1. It will tear them in pieces like a lion: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I will tear, and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him," Hos. v. 14. So Job xvi 9. "The Lord teareth me in his wrath." So

Psal. i. 22. "Now consider this, all ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." 2. It consumes like fire: "For behold the day cometh that shall burn like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall leave them neither root nor branch," Mal. iv. 1. "Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath," Ezek. xxi. 31.

3. It swallows up like a dragon: "He hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon," Jer. li. 34. "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them," Psal. xxi. 9. Oh! the wrath of the Almighty is that which tears like a lion, consumes like a fire, and swallows up like a dragon; and therefore it is called in the Scripture, *fierce* wrath, 2 Kings xxiii. 26. Psal. lxxviii. 49. "He casts upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble." So in Rev. xvi. 19. it is said, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." Thus, beloved, I have shewed you the

nature and property of this great day, spoken of in my text.'

1. A day of astonishment. 2. A day of terror. 3. A day of distress. 4. A day of contempt. 5. A day of destruction. 6. A day of wrath.

I shall now come, in the *Third* place, to shew you, who they are that will not be able to stand in this great day.

First, Such as are profane will not be able to stand in this great day, but "say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us," Luke xxiii. 30. "Because they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee, as profane, out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire," Ezek. xxviii. 16. So Rom. ii. 9. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil." Oh, ye profane! ye that now wallow in your sins, as the sow in the mire, and eat up sin, as they eat bread, and drink up iniquity like water; Oh! let me tell you, you will not be able to stand in the day of wrath, nor in the day of judgment; but destruction will be your end, and everlasting misery your portion. Oh! that such would but consider these two places of Scripture, Phil. iii. 19. "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." As also that in 1 Cor.

vi. 9, 10. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Though these men may now carry it out with a high hand, as if they had made a covenant with death, and with hell they were at an agreement; but your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it, Isa. xxviii. 15, 18.

Secondly, Such as are ignorant will not be able to stand in this great day of God's wrath, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7—9. Oh, you that are ignorant and blind, do you hear this? You are some of those who will not be able to stand in this great day, but say to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Beloved, I told you in the morning, that ignorance is one of those cursed sins that

bars and bolts Christ out of the heart: it is that which shuts them out from having mercy and favour with the Lord: see Isa. xxvii. 11. "For it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour."

Thirdly, Such as have sided with antichrist against Christ, will not be able to stand in this great day; such as have drunk of the whore's cup of fornication, shall drink of the cup of God's indignation, which is poured out without mixture: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," Rev. xiv. 9, 10. Oh, beloved! all those who have been partakers with her in sinning, shall be partakers with her in suffering; therefore, "come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. All that cursed brood of Rome, with all the antichristian crew, will not be able to stand in this great day of God's wrath, but will be consumed like fuel, and devoured as stubble fully dry. See Nah. i. 9, 10. "What do you imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. For while they be

folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." So that all those who have assisted antichrist against Christ, against his government, against his gospel, against his Spirit, against his worship, against his ministers, against his members, and against his glorious cause; I say, they will not be able to stand in this great day of God's wrath, but "cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi. 16.

Fourthly, Such as have a form of godliness, and deny the power thereof, will not be able to stand in this great day of God's wrath, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away," 2 Tim. iii. 5. All idle and slothful professors, who have nothing of God, nor nothing of Christ, nor nothing of the Spirit, nor nothing of the power of the word in them, having only a notional or formal profession; such, I say, will not be able to stand in this great day. See Rom. ii. 17, 19, 20. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law." But mark what God saith to such, ver. 23. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?"

Ver. 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles, through you." Oh! are there not many among us who profess God in words, but deny him in works; who have a name to live, and are dead; who have a form, but not the power; who have all without, and nothing within? Like those in Matth. vii. 22. there spoken of by Christ, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? (ver. 23.) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Fifthly, Such as are idle shepherds, and blind guides, will not be able to stand in that great day of God's wrath, but will "cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the face of the Lamb." For this see a few scriptures among many, what the Lord speaketh against the idle shepherds, and blind guides, who feed themselves, and not the flock of Christ. See Ezek. xxxiv. 2—4. "Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed them which were sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, nei-

ther have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost : but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." Ver. 9, 10. "Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more : for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them." "For both prophet and priest are profane ; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.—Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall ; for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land," Jer. xxiii. 11, 15. See also Hosea iv. from ver. 1. to 11. Mark also what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, (Matth. xxiii. 14.) of idle shepherds, and blind guides, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

Thus you see, beloved, that the Scriptures with open mouth, do speak forth the desolations and calamities which will befall idle shepherds, and blind guides in that day ; and if they cannot stand when his wrath is kindled but a little, oh ! what will they

do when wrath shall come upon them to the utmost, even the fierceness of his wrath? Then will they not be able to stand.

Sixthly, Such as are hypocrites will not be able to stand in this day of God's wrath, but desire, if it were possible, to hide themselves, in the dens and caves of the earth: "And the people shall be as the burning of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done, and ye that are near acknowledge my might: The sinners of Sion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?" See Job viii. 13. "So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Ver. 14. "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web." Ver. 15. "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." Oh, thou hypocrite, whoever thou art, notwithstanding thou hast got the talking part of religion, and makest a shew of godliness, yet all this while thou art a dissembler in thy heart. See Jer. xlii. 20—22. "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God, and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. And now I have this day declared it to you, but ye have not obeyed the

voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. Now therefore know certainly, that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn." Do you hear this, you that are hypocrites, that God hates such, and will punish them with great punishments? He will cut them asunder, and give them their portion with the reprobates, and cast-aways, in everlasting burning, Matt. xxiv. 51.

Seventhly, and Lastly, All such as love not the Lord Jesus Christ in truth and sincerity, will not be able to stand in this day of God's wrath: whether they be Turks or Jews, Papists or Protestants, bond or free, all is one, for they will not be able to stand if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ: See 1 Cor. xvi. 22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Oh, beloved, all those who shall be found unbelievers, unconverted, and unregenerate in this day of God's wrath, be they kings, or great men, or rich men, or chief captains, or mighty men, or free men, they shall cry to the mountains, and rocks, saying, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come." Thus, beloved, I have shewed you briefly, in seven particulars, who they are that will not be able to stand in the day of God's wrath. 1. The profane. 2. The ignorant. 3. They that side with antichrist

against Christ. 4. The formal professor. 5. The idle shepherds and blind guides. 6. The hypocrites. 7. and lastly, They that love not the Lord Jesus Christ.

Object. But, beloved, it may be you will say, If none of these be able to stand, who then will?

Answ. I answer, All those who shall be found having on their wedding garments, and in the Spirit of the Lamb, will be able to stand in this day, and they are these:—*1st*, They that overcome, Rev. ii. 11. iii. 21. xii. 11. and xxi. 7.—*2nd*, They that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, Rev. xii. 17. vi. 9.—*3rd*, They that stand with the Lamb, Rev. xiv. 1. xvii. 14.—*4th*, They that have their Father's name written in their foreheads, Rev. xiv. 1.—*5th*, They that sing a new song, chap. xiv. 3.—*6th*, They that are redeemed from the earth, ver. 3.—*7th*, They that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, ver. 4.—*8th*, They that are not defiled with the pollutions of the whore of Babylon, and in their mouths is found no guile, ver. 5. Now, beloved, these are they that will be able to stand in that great day of God's wrath, when others will not be able, but call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them. I shall now proceed, in the fourth place, to the use and application of the point.

USE I. And first of all, By way of information. If it be so, that the greatest part of men and women will not be able to stand in this great day of God's

wrath; then this may inform us of three things:
1st, That as men have had their day, so God will have his day. Men have had their day of sinning, God will have his day of punishing. Men have had their day of treasuring up wrath, God will have his day of pouring out of his wrath. Men have had their day of defiling, God will have his day of refining. Men have had their day of fornication, God will have his day of indignation; "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, so it shall be done unto thee, thy reward shall return upon thine own head," Obad. 15.—*2ndly*, That though God beareth with sinners in the day of his patience, yet he will not bear with them in the day of his wrath. "Go through the city, and smite it; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity," Ezek. ix. 5. Oh, beloved! in the day of God's patience he beareth with you, and waiteth to be gracious. Oh, how many hundred years hath God borne with the whore of Babylon, notwithstanding of her great provocations and wickedness? But now in the day of his wrath, the Lord will not spare her, nor shew pity on her, but pour out his wrath and indignation upon her to the utmost: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her," Rev. xviii. 8. Oh, see that terrible word," Isa. xlii. 13, 14. "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he

shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace, I have been still, and refrained myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman, I will destroy and devour at once." Do you see this, sinners, how God is resolved to proceed against you in the day of his wrath, though he bear with you in the day of his patience!—*3rdly*, This day of God's wrath will be a very dreadful and terrible day to the wicked, as appears by what hath been said. Oh, sinners! it will be a day of astonishment, a day of terror, a day of distress, a day of contempt, a day of destruction, a day of wrath. Oh! it will be "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds, and thick darkness," Joel ii. 2. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of thick darkness," Zeph. i. 14, 15. Oh, who is able to express the terror of the Almighty in the day of his wrath! Oh, that every soul that hears me this day, would lay it to heart, and consider with themselves, that they may be able to stand in this day of God's wrath. And so much for this use of information.

USE II. By way of examination and self-trial: Oh friends! how much doth it concern you and me

to examine our standing, that we may be able to stand in the day of God's wrath, which is coming so fast upon us. Oh, you see, how that his wrath is but a little kindled, and yet how hard a matter it is for men to stand, and to abide it! Thousands have been sent to their graves by it, and many hundreds have left their habitations because of it, and are fled out of the city into several parts of this kingdom for refuge. Oh, what a sad and doleful place hath this city been for several weeks past! The greatest trade which had been here amongst us, was to bury the dead, and attend the sick. Oh now, my brethren, if this little be so much, what will it be when the great day of his wrath is come? Who will then be able to stand? Oh, therefore, examine yourselves, and try yourselves; examine your faith, whether it be true; your knowledge, whether it be sanctified; your hope, whether it be purified; your love, whether it be sincere; your evidences, whether they be sound: your hearts whether they be gracious; your desires, whether they be holy; your ends, whether they be right; and your conversations, whether they be heavenly, that you may be able to stand in the day of God's wrath, in the day of death, and in the day of judgment, 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

USE III. By way of exhortation. And I shall be brief, lest I should intrude too much upon your patience; but I hope you will not think the time

long; for it may be the last sermon that I may preach, or you may hear. Well, beloved, is it so, that the greatest part of men and women will not be able to stand in the great day of God's wrath? Give me leave therefore to exhort you to these three things.

First, You that are sinners, to repent of your sins: "for he that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13, 14. "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Oh, sinners! you have grievously sinned against God: you have deserved as many hells as you have committed sins; you have sinned against his mercies; you have abused his patience; you have resisted his Spirit; you have disobeyed his gospel; you have made light of his ministers, and have hated his members. Oh, sinners! all this have you done, and yet the Lord hath spared you: and though you have sinned at so high a rate, yet God doth give you space to repent. Oh, let his goodness lead you to repentance, that you die not in your sins. Oh, therefore, for God's sake, and for Christ's sake, be prevailed withal. Why will ye die, seeing God will have you live? Why will ye damn yourselves? Why will ye go to hell, seeing God would have you go to heaven?

Oh, do but see what the Lord saith, Isa. i. 18. "Come, sinners," saith the Lord, "and let me and thee reason together: though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be white like wool." Verily, if you have not hearts of stone, methinks these words should melt you, to see the love, the pity, the mercy, and willingness of God to do your souls good.

Secondly, Let me exhort you to get an interest in the Lord Jesus, that you may be able to stand in the day of his wrath. Oh, sinners! there will be no standing before Christ without an interest in Christ. Oh sinners! go to Christ, his promises are open to you, his arms are open to embrace you, his Spirit is ready to assist you, and his people to own you, and his angels are ready to attend you, and heaven itself is ready to receive you. Oh, sinners! if you will but come to Christ you shall be reconciled to the Father, justified by the Son, you shall be sanctified by the Spirit, you shall be delivered from wrath, you shall be made the children of God, you shall have your names enrolled in the book of love. And, finally, you shall be received into everlasting glory at the end of your days. Oh, therefore, let this prevail with you to go to Christ, for light, for life, for grace, for strength, and for comfort and peace, that "of his fulness you may receive grace for grace," John i. 16.

Thirdly, and lastly, Let me now exhort you, who are dead to sin, separated from the world, espoused to Christ, reconciled to the Father, to “walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory,” 1 Thess. ii. 12. Oh, ye precious saints! let me exhort you to keep your lamps burning, your loins girded, your lives holy, and your hearts upright, your judgments sound, your consciences pure, and your garments unspotted; and be not troubled at God’s dealings and dispensations, though he take away from you those that are precious to you: for as he sends the wicked to hell, that they may dishonour him no more, so he takes away the righteous to heaven, that they may glorify him more. There seems to be four reasons why God sweeps away the righteous with the wicked by the pestilence.

1. Because they have finished their work.
2. From the evil time.
3. For the humbling the rest that remain behind.
4. For the hardening of the wicked.

Therefore, ye precious saints, you ought to be quiet, and to submit to the will of God, and to say as David, “I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,” Psal. xxxix. 9. Now, I beseech you, both saints and sinners, to consider of these things: and the God of heaven give you understanding in all things which concern his glory, and your eternal good.

WATCH AND PRAY.

MARK XIV. 38.

Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

As Christ is the church's friend, so Satan is the church's enemy : her greatest enemy, her cruellest enemy, her worst enemy, her continual enemy : he that makes war against the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, Rev. xii. 17. The devil envieth our happiness, and seeketh our ruin,

1. By tempting of us, 1 Cor. vii. 5.
2. By persecuting of us, Rev. ii. 10.
3. By accusing of us, Rev. xii. 10.
4. By hindering of us, 1 Thess. ii. 18.
5. By beguiling of us, 2 Cor. xi. 3.

Oh, beloved ! the devil is the great troubler of saints, the great deceiver of nations, the great devourer of souls, the great enemy of mankind, "who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8.

But now, here is the church's happiness, that Christ is her friend, (Cant. v. 16.) her greatest friend, her dearest friend, her loving friend, her best friend, her constant friend, her sympathizing friend, her mighty friend. By his blood she overcomes the devil, by his grace she resists the devil, by his might she treads him under her feet : and

by faith in his word, she quenches all the fiery darts of the devil.

Oh! though Satan hate us, Christ loves us; though Satan condemn us, Christ justifies us; though Satan accuse us, Christ clears us; though Satan tempt us, Christ strengthens us; though Satan seeks to destroy us, Christ preserves us though Satan buffets us, Christ assists us: 1. By his Spirit. 2. By his promises. 3. By his graces. 4. By his presence. 5. By his word. 6. By his intercession. 7. By his power. 8. By his ministers. 9. By his example. 10. By his prayer.

Oh! the Lord Jesus hath a great love for us, and care of us; and therefore he counsels us in the words of my text, to “watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation.”

These are the words of our Lord Jesus unto his disciples; they having been slumbering and sleeping when Christ had commanded them to watch. They contain, 1. A supposition of their entering into temptation, upon which Christ grounds a mandatory exhortation, shewing them the way how to avoid it, in these words, “Watch and pray,” &c.

Hence we may raise these two points of doctrine.

DOCT. I. That a child of God is attended with temptations.

DOCT. II. That the only way to avoid the evil of temptation, is to watch and pray.

For the first of these, we may observe this me-

GENESIS. XVII. 10.



ABRAHAM AND ISAAC.

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thod ; 1. Of the tempter. 2. Of the temptation. 3. Of the manner of their working, with reasons why they have so much power.

I. We have four several tempters in Scripture .

First, God tempting man, that is, trying and proving man, as in Deut. viii. 2. Thus God tempted Abraham, Gen. xxii. 1. which is interpreted, Heb. xi. 17. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac," &c. This tempting is not evil, nor for our hurt ; but God tempts upon these accounts : *1st*, For the trial of his people's fear, as in that of Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12. "For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thine only son from me." *2nd*, God tempts for the trial of their faith ; he proves them in something that is near and dear to them, perhaps deprives them of some special necessary mercy to see whether they can trust him, and believe in the want of it, whether they can live by faith upon the God of mercies when the mercies are gone, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Heb x. 38. Rom. i. 17. And it is said of Abraham, "When he was tried, he offered up Isaac," Heb. xi. 17. Again, *3rd*, The Lord tempts for the proof of their obedience ; and thus the Lord speaks to Abraham after that trial, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Why ? "Because thou hast obeyed my voice." In all this, the Lord seeth what is in our hearts, as he said to Israel of old, Deut. viii. 2. We may find man tempting

God too, that is, provoking God to jealousy and wrath, this did the children of Israel at the waters of Meriban, Deut. vi. 16. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God." Exod. xvii. 2. "Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" But first of all, we tempt God when we doubt of his power; as when we are in any strait or difficulty, we mistrust the power of God to deliver us, or bestow any mercy upon us which we stand in need of: as that lord did on whose hand the king leaned, who said, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be;" when God had promised in time of a famine, that on the morrow there should be plenty, 2 Kings vii. 2.

Secondly, We tempt God, when we doubt of his mercy, for God is mercy in the abstract, and it is a part of his glorious stile; therefore he cannot endure to lose so great a part of his honour, but is provoked by it.

Thirdly, When we call his faithfulness in question; what greater disparagement, or more disgraceful thing can there be to man, than to be wrongly accused for falsifying his word? Then how much greater provocation is it to the great God to be impeached for the breach of promise, and counted unfaithful, who cannot lie! Heb. vi. 18.

Lastly, When we murmur at the hand of God, at any of his judgments; this Israel did at Meribah, Exod. xvii. 2, 3. And this doth exceedingly inflame and excite the wrath of God; we

cannot dispose of ourselves. and yet we are angry at the providence of an all-wise God : we sin, and are not troubled that God corrects us for sin.

In the next place, Our lusts are tempters, as Jam. i. 14. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own heart's lust, and enticed ;" Our lusts strive against us to be sinfully satisfied, and the flesh wars with the spirit, the heart sometimes alluring ; and this comes to pass,

1. By presenting some sinful object. It is good not to nourish such conceptions, but strangle them in their first appearance, else sinful thoughts grow upon us.

2. By presenting some desirableness in the object : but be quick sighted ; sin, however it seems fair upon some colourable pretext, is indeed, upon good deliberation, not at all to be desired ; but sometimes it comes clothed in such a glorious garb, as if it meant no harm, that you must be fain to flee to God by prayer against this temptation.

3. There is a persuasion to consent to the sin ; but be not easily persuaded to offend your Father. Oh ! how will our lusts gain upon us if we do not resist ! Strive with all your might ; the greater your allurement to sin is, the greater the sin is ; I appeal to saints' experience.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, We have the devil tempting man : he is called the tempter, Matth. iv. 1, 3. Mark i. 13. And indeed this is the

grand tempter that makes use of our lusts, as a subservient organ, or instrument, for his temptations against the soul; and indeed, were it not for our lusts, it would be in vain for Satan to tempt; as we see in Christ, there was nothing for Satan to take hold of, Christ being without sinful lusts, but Satan must come by word of mouth to tempt him, Matth. iv. 13. But here it may be inquired, How shall I know when Satan raiseth temptation?

1. I answer, When it comes strongly and forcibly upon the soul, as it were with a double power, even overflowing the soul almost at the first encounter. There is double strength in the stroke.

2. When it is of long continuance, as that was which Paul besought the Lord thrice for, 2 Cor. xii. 8. Satan stirs up the heart afresh, and the lust of the heart; when the fire is ready to die and go out, he blows it up again, adds life and strength to the temptation, which else could not last long. The lusts they are the combustible matter, and Satan he inflames and sets them on fire.

3. The temptation, when though it may be weak at the first, yet at length, by degrees, it grows stronger and stronger: Satan begins to reason with and persuade the soul by plausible arguments.

4. We may perceive the working of the serpent, the devil, when the temptation is full of wiles and

subtile delusions, Epn. vi. 11. 2 Tim. ii. 17. Rev. ii. 24. The more intricate and full of subtilty the temptation is, the more cause there is to suspect. Satan is very busy for ensaring the soul.

5. and *lastly*, The more it is direct opposition to God in his commands, or the like, we may be the more sure that it is of Satan's framing; for the heart and its lusts seek for satisfaction, and then are still, (if Satan join not,) though God be not so directly opposite; but the devil strikes always at God in his temptations: or if not always, yet most frequently.

Thus much for the tempter: now for the temptation itself. There are several sorts of temptations; but to reduce them all to those three heads, they do concern and strike at,

First of all, God: this being Satan's great aim, to oppose God, as two enemies always in direct opposition one to another: and thus he tempts either first as to the being of God, calling in question the very truth of the essence of the great God, causing the soul to doubt whether there be a God or no; like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord?" &c. Exod. v. 2.

But, *Secondly*, Some temptations touch upon the nature of God, as to the nature of his being, the mystery of the three distinct persons, as to their offices and operations in the individual Godhead, God the Father, God the Son, and God the

Holy Spirit ; and yet all but one God, blessed for ever. Again, as to those inseparable divine attributes of God, his independency, purity, immutability, greatness, and eternity, his goodness, grace, mercy, love, patience, and justice. I say, sometimes in doubting of these things is our temptation ; yea, and could Satan prevail, we should flatly deny his being, nature, properties, and all. Look sternly on, and resist strongly such temptations as these, which do immediately and presumptuously intrench upon God's sovereign and just prerogative. And, if I mistake not, a great device of Satan's in stratagem is, to persuade the creature from all dependence upon a Creator, that so, being left to itself, and standing upon its own strength, he may more easily destroy it. For what is the creature, without the Creator's power ?

Again, some temptations touch our spiritual being ; such as an evil heart of unbelief, mistrusting the grace of God, despairing of the goodness of our condition. Satan would rase the very foundation of spiritual existence, adoption, justification, and hopes of salvation : it is his great design to shake the very ground-work of this building, and to persuade that all is false. But this temptation is fruitless, when we build aright upon a right foundation, by faith, accompanied with repentance from dead works, upon Jesus Christ, as the alone author and meritorious cause of our justification, and eternal glorification.

Lastly, Satan by his fiery darts strikes at our well being, to disturb our peace, by the omission of some duty, or commission of some sin: when he finds he cannot prevail to destroy our well-being, our joy and comfort. But know, though these temptations may trouble us, yet they shall never destroy us.

Now, for the manner of these temptations, how they work.

1. When all fall under want, strait, change of providence, or the like, then is a time for temptation to work; as when Christ had fasted, and was an hungred, then comes the tempter; "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," Matth. iv. 3.

2. When we are first turning from sin to God, then we are sure to meet with a tempter; Satan will be busy.

3. When we are troubled, dejected, disconsolated, either as to the outward or inward estate, then beware of Satan's temptations; he will be furthering our disquietments.

4. When we are arrived to some good hopes through grace, to some confidence in the mercy of God the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, then also shall we find the battering assaults of Satan, to shake our confidence; but be sure always that the ground of your confidence be good, established upon the everlasting rock, Jesus Christ: for, if I mistake not my observation, there

are two great rocks which Satan strives to split a soul upon, presumption and despair.

Sometimes endeavouring to cause souls to flatter up themselves, and think grace is theirs, Christ is theirs, and all is theirs, when it is nothing so ; but by this he might carry them blind to hell, hood-winking their souls so, that they never come to see thoroughly that they are in a bad condition, but think always their condition is good. The other rock is despair : Satan striving, if he cannot blind them as he doth the other presumptuous souls, yet to make them go sorrowing all their days, thinking they shall never obtain that mercy, which others think they always had.

5. Satan suits his temptations to our dispositions ; he hath various objects for divers spirits, for the proud haughty soul, for the lustful heart, for the covetous worldling, for the prodigal son, for the rash giddy brain, for the sluggish drone, for the melancholy person, for the light cheerful spirit ; especially these two, either sinking the one in the terrible ways of black and dreadful thoughts, or tossing and lifting up the other with the wind of foolish fancy. Oh ! what black apprehensions shall the one have of itself and God, and what light and slight thoughts the other of their present state and of eternity !

Lastly, Satan aims to lull the soul asleep in carnal security ; and to this end presents great sins as small, and little sins (if any there be) as

none at all. But sometimes he will add by temptations, as it were a multiplying-glass to the soul, so that then every sin that looks with a ghastly countenance, is thought to be the sin against the Holy Spirit, an unpardonable sin.

Having thus shewn how, and upon what occasion Satan works; I shall take occasion to inquire why they have so much power, as many times to prevail.

1. Because of the tempter's power, he is perhaps too strong for the soul.

2. Because of the tempter's policy, if he cannot prevail by open force, the soul being well and strongly grounded, then he invades with subtle devices and secret stratagems, so that the soul cannot escape by strength only; and therefore, wanting wisdom to invade his cunningly framed arguments, is baffled by him and overthrown.

3. The enticing nature of the tempter's baits; as, to instance in one case: Oh! how many poor sincere souls, yet guilty of too much curiosity, have been entangled by curiously glorious, and gloriously curious tenets, which were no better than the devilish temptations of that hellish tempter! How many, (which yet is strange to think though there is reason to fear it,) nay, after their seeming comfortable, really comfortless, wandering, walkings in thought-ways of truth, have cause to set down their steps, marking for

every step a sin, and for every sin letting fall a tear of blood :

4. Temptations often prevail by reason of the strength of corruption, which the tempter works upon. Were there no corruptions, there would be few or no temptations ; I am sure they should not prevail.

5. and *lastly*, The tempter's prevalency proceeds from the weakness and low estate of the inward man : sin is never at a higher flood, than when grace is at a low ebb. It is a hard matter (believe experience) to keep the soul from sinking at such a time. Nothing more easy than to thrust a man under water, when the depth of the water is more than the height of the man.

Object. But now to make sure the doctrinal part, I shall lay down some reasons, why the people of God are thus attended with temptations, for it is a natural objection against this point, "Why will the Lord who is so merciful to his people, suffer them to be thus used and buffeted by temptations?"

Answ. I answer in general on God's behalf, that he is never the less tender, as will appear in particular, thus :

1. Because one end seems to be this, that they might know themselves the better, and see what they are naturally: were it not for temptation, we should not come to know our own corrup-

tion. We see by this what lust is most prevalent in us, according to that in Heb xii. 1. "The sin that doth so easily beset us;" and what Satan makes most use of against us. We learn by this, our own weakness to resist, without assisting grace.

2. Again, it is for a saint's exercise; this tempted condition of God's artillery, is his school of arms wherein God brings up his children, trains them and instructs them how to clasp on their helmet of salvation, to put on the breast-plate of righteousness, to hold out the shield of faith, to brandish the sword of the Spirit; in a word, how to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, even our whole armour of righteousness.

3. That we might know our enemies, that we may be the more watchful over Satan, sin, and the world.

4. That we might long to be at home with our Father, that we might be weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts of this present world.

Lastly, The Lord doth it to bear down our pride, and keep us humble; we should else be too much lifted up through our continual spiritual prosperity; and thus it was with Paul, 2 Cor. x. 7, 8.

This doctrine may afford us this useful application by way of, 1. Information. 2. Reprehension.

3. Examination. 4. Consolation. 5. Exhortation.

First, Information. It may inform us, 1. Of the devil's enmity, who is so much the saint's foe, as at he will not let him be quiet. This old serpent that first deceived Adam, and deprived him of paradise; yea, and ever since he hath been, and still is, very busy to dispossess the saints, if possible, of their spiritual paradise.

2. We may learn hence the remaining seeds of corruption that are in the best of saints; without which (as I noted before) the devil would always tempt in vain.

3. We may perceive what is the saint's state here below: it hath indeed many fair pleasant prospects to the Christian's eye, (I mean the eye of faith) but the way is a tempted, troublesome, dangerous way, Acts xiv. 22.

4. It may teach us the wisdom of God, and his great care of the saints, who makes use of Satan's enmity and our corruptions to do us good withal.

Secondly, Reprehension; and thus it reproves those who think it an easy matter, a thing of nothing, to be a Christian.

2. It reproves such who censure poor tempted afflicted ones. 1. Under their temptations, though not overcome. 2. When fallen, and oh! how rash, uncharitable, and unchristian-like are they!

3 It is an occasion of rebuke to those who

think it strange that either themselves or others should be tempted.

Thirdly, Examination. This in these particulars :

1. To examine who is the tempter.

2. To examine the temptation.

3. To examine the frame our hearts are under ; whether we carry it lightly and indifferently, or are grieved and troubled for them.

Fourthly, Consolation. From these arguments :

Arg. 1. A tempted condition is frequent among the saints ; yea, and so useful, that I may confidently question whether he were ever truly a saint, that is not tempted. And for this assertion there is a cloud of witnesses in Scripture, one in 1 Cor x. 13.

Arg. 2. God hath promised assistance to tempted ones, 2 Cor. xii. 9. “ My grace is sufficient for thee,” &c. God is as able to help, as thou canst be weak, when thou art tempted.

Arg. 3. Christ was tempted, that he might know how to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18. read from ver. 9.

Arg. 4. It is a blessing, or a blessed thing to endure temptations, James i. 12. and v. 11.

Arg. 5. The saints’ temptations are needful for them, 1 Pet. i. 6. Thou canst not be without them.

Arg. 6. They are but the trial of faith, 1 Pet. i. 7. James i. 3, 4. And should we be grieved

that our faith is proved? The goldsmith rather useth than avoideth the fire for the trying of his gold; neither is the gold diminished, but rather its worth more fully known when the dross is gone. This is the trial that doth try the faith of every child of God.

Arg. 7. God hath promised the burden shall not be too great for us to bear, 1 Cor. x. 13. This is ground of comfort, to know we shall not be over-matched by the temptation.

Arg. 8. A great comfort is, that God thinks upon us at such a time: we are sure of this both because of the temptations, and also the support we have under them.

Arg. 9. Many times it goes before some signal providence; and we may take it as a great sign, that God is about to do some great thing for us, or we must be employed in some great work for him: thus he did with Israel, proved them forty years, before he gave them to possess the land.

Arg. 10. Be not disconsolate; strong and long-enduring temptations, when meeting with resistance, are a strong argument of a strong faith, and especially of the growth and increase of faith. But to be brief:

Arg. 11. Consider, the saints' condition here is not their best state: there is heaven to come yet, where there is no tempter.

Arg. 12. We have not been so much, nor so often tempted, as we ourselves have tempted God.

Arg. 13. The devil's temptations, though they be evils, yet are not the saints' evils, unless they are overcome by them.

Arg. 14. It is a great sign of God's love, so of Satan's hatred, and so consequently a token that thou art none of his, but God's, else he would never rage thus. The devil makes no such ado with wicked ones.

Arg. 15. As our temptations now abound, so shall our joy, in time, much more abound.

Many arguments for consolation I might make use of, and much more enlargement upon these; all which, for brevity's sake, I here omit.

Fifthly, For exhortation. 1. Beware how you tempt the devil to tempt you; how you give occasion by indulging any sin or lust. 2. When you are tempted, be not cowardly, but courageous, do not flee, but resist, James iv. 7. 3. Beware of pride, when delivered out of temptation; this may make us fall into a dangerous relapse.

Having finished this point, I proceed to shew, in the next observation, how we may avoid the evil of temptation, that is, to watch and pray.

In the handling of this doctrine, we may consider these four things. 1. What it is to watch. 2. What it is to pray. 3. The proof of the point. 4. How watching and praying may conduce to our escape from the evil of temptation.

Concerning the duty of watching, observe,

1st, What watching implies. *2ndly*, How we may do to watch.

First, Watching implies, 1. A continual waking, like the spouse, Cant. v. 2. 2. A diligent hearkening; thus the watchman, Isa. xxi. 7. 3. A constant readiness: Peter exhorts, under a metaphorical expression, 1. Pet. i. 13. "Gird your loins," that is, be ready: it is taken from the Jews' long garments which they used to gird about them, that they might run with less interruption.

Secondly, How we may do to watch: I shall but name the particulars. 1. Let the heart be continually fixed upon God. Oh! how will this cool our affections to the world, and kindle the fire of love to God!

2. Let the eye be much upon self: this will keep us low in spirit: "And blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 3.

3. Beware of drowsiness; we should take it off by prayer.

4. Be well resolved in spirit; mind that of the prophet, 1 Kings xviii. 21.

5. Be sure all be well within; be sure thy foundation be Christ: let there be no sin unrepented of, that will breed sorrow; harbour no enemy, no lust in thy soul, Prov. xx. 9.

6. Trust not thine (no not thine own) heart, but regulate it by the word of God: for "the

heart is deceitful," Jer. xvii. 9. And he is a fool that trusts in his heart, Prov. xxviii. 26.

7. Keep therefore a narrow eye to the heart, Prov. iv. 23.

8. Call thine heart often to a strict account, Psal. iv. 4. Examine diligently, What have I done? What do I now? What am I about to do?

9. And if there be any thing out of order, tarry not, but repair it suddenly. Lay sin upon Christ, and then mourn over it.

10. Let nothing be suggested, and presently entertained, but first brought to trial. See if it be the will of God, if it be for his glory: if it be not for his glory, it is not his will.

11. Be sure to keep conscience clear: a little filth there, stops all the channel. It is dangerous to know of one sin, and not to confess it; much more dangerous to know thy sin, and wink at it.

12. For this end keep an open ear to conscience, let it speak.

13. Let the mouth be stopped to sin, and the hands tied up from wickedness. David prays that a watch may be set to the door of his lips: And certainly it is very needful.

14. Let the whole armour of God be on, Eph. vi. 10—18.

Thus much concerning watching; now concerning prayer. Consider, 1. What prayer is. 2.

The several kinds of prayer. 3. The manner how we are to pray.

1. Prayer is the outward enlargement of the soul's inward breathings: it is a work of God's Spirit, and so flows out of the spirit and heart of a man, Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 26, 27. Jude, ver. 20. 1 Cor. xiv. 19. Psal. lxii. 8. and xlii. 4. Prayer is a talking of the heart and soul with God, and of such a heart as is prepared by God, Jer. xxix. 13. Psal. xxvii. 1, 10, 17.

2. And thus it is either mental in the heart only, Exod. xiv. 15. 1 Sam. i. 13. Or else vocal, uttered by the voice, Psal. lxxvii. 1. Again, there is secret prayer, when we pray alone: thus Daniel did when he set open his windows, Dan. vi. 10, 11. Or, more public, when we pray with others in the family, congregation, &c. And here let some preparatives to prayer be added: *First*, Pray that you may pray: lift up your eyes and your heart to God, when about to pray: thus did David, Psal. cxli. 1, 2. *Secondly*, Meditate, 1. On God's sufficiency, and especially his promises, Psal. i. 15. Matth. vii. 7. This will make you confident in prayer.

3. On thine own want and vileness, that thou mayest be fervent; so did Ezra, chap. ix. 6, 7.

4. On the great Majesty of God, to beget humility, and lowliness of spirit, Eccl. v. 2. Gen. xxxii. 9, 10.

5. On the relation thou standest in to God, by Christ, as the Father.

Thirdly, Now, how are we to pray? 1. We must pray what we understand, and understand what we pray, 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

2. We must pray in the Holy Spirit, be directed by it, Jude, ver. 20. Rom. viii. 28.

3. In the name and mediation of Christ; that is, relying upon the merits of his, not our righteousness, John xiv. 13, 14. and xvi. 23.

4. With faith, believingly, that God will give us what is good for us, James i. 6, 7.

5. With humility and acknowledgment of our own unworthiness, Psal. x. 17.

6. With an heart willing to be cleansed by the blood of Christ, James iv. 6. From every pollution, Heb. x. 12. Psal. lxvi. 18.

7. With love to the saints, Matth. vi. 14, 15.

8. With zeal and fervency, James v. 16.

9. Do not give off, but wrestle with God for a blessing, with unwearied constancy, Luke xviii. 1—9. Matth. xv. 8

10. Pray for heavenly things first and most; seek earthly things in the second place; the one absolutely, the other conditionally, Matth. vi. 33.

11. Pray for things agreeable to the will of God, 1 John v. 14.

12. Take heed ye love not long prayers, and think to be heard because they are long, Matth. vi. 7.

Now I come to the proof of this point, that the only way to avoid the evil of temptation, is to watch and pray. This is clearly stated in the text, so that it scarce needs more confirmation; only take that of Paul when buffeted with temptation. "For this," saith he, "I besought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 8. There is great need of watching and prayer,

1. Before we fall into temptation.

2. When we are under temptation; how watching and prayer conduceth to the anticipating the assaults of Satan, frustrating temptation.

First of all, For watching.

1. It sets us in a readiness for an assault; when we are expecting, we shall not be taken unprovided.

2. It adds resolution to stand out against Satan; we know suddenness strikes us into a fear, when expectation and deliberation increaseth courage.

3. It is a countermines to all Satan's stratagems. It will deceive the deceiver, to find us watching with spiritual diligence, when he would have us sleeping in carnal security.

4. Watching secures us from much evil that might be added, in case we were drawn to the temptation; for security is no better than a temptation, especially at such a time.

Secondly, For prayer. This conduceth to avoid the evil of temptation: because it fetcheth help from God, in whom is all our strength: for it is

God's promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Psal. l. 15. It is a great comfort under temptation to have a God to go to, especially one that is able and willing to help.

This may instruct us, then *First*, There is great need of watching. It is certainly an universal necessary duty for all saints, at whatever time, to watch; so saith Christ our Saviour, "What I say unto you, I say unto you all, watch," Mark xiii. 37. The great end of this duty is the coming of the Lord Jesus; "Watch," saith Christ, "for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come," Matth. xxiv. 42, 44. There are three considerations may move us to watch: 1. Let us consider whom we offend and dishonour by our neglect in watching, no less than God. And would we, rather than want a nap of security, displease our God? Is God no more worth to us than so? Let us seriously weigh, how great an offence, how great a dishonour to God unwatchfulness is, and this will engage us to watch.

2. Let us consider whom we gratify and advantage by our neglects, no less an enemy than Satan, the enemy of our souls. And shall we pleasure our grand adversary? Oh, no; then let us watch.

3. Whom we displease, it is ourselves. And will we that our souls should be losers? If not, let us be much, yea, always upon our watch.

But, *Secondly*, It may inform us of the neces-

sity of praying at all times: "Pray without ceasing," 1 Thess. v. 17. So David would pray and cry aloud, "At evening, at morning, and at noon," Psal. lv. 17. And Daniel would pray thrice a-day, Dan. vi. 16. It is the duty of all, and every saint, in all conditions. In spiritual things: *1st*, Pray for grace, that God would give and increase it either in thyself or others. *2ndly*, Pray against sin, against the guilt of sin, against the power of sin. *3rdly*, Pray against Satan's temptations.

1. Against the occasion of the temptation, that (if it be possible) thou mayst shun and escape the very appearance of it.

2. That the strength of corruption within, and the power of temptation without, may not be so prevalent, as to lead thee captive to evil.

3. Pray that the entrance into temptation may be no disadvantage to thy grace, and that the escape from it may be no impeachment to, but rather for the advancement of God's glory.

1. Pray for nothing but what thou standest in need of. Unnecessary things are not to be the subject of our petitions; and therefore our Saviour bids us pray for our daily bread. And so that good man Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," Prov. xxx. 7—9.—2. Even in these things, pray with submission to the will of God.—3. If watching and prayer be the means to escape the evil of temptation; then the strength of a saint is not sufficient. No, we must go to God

for deliverance.—4. If we do not watch and pray, all other means are irregular at least, if not sin.

Thus much for information. Now for exhortation.

1. Watch and pray continually, but especially at a time of temptation. 2. Be serious in watching and prayer; some do it between hot and cold, or by fits, or in much lightness of spirit. But, said the apostle, “Be sober, and watch unto prayer.” Sobriety and seriousness becomes those that call upon God.



CONSIDERATIONS ON DEATH :

CONTAINING

Some few reasons why men fear it ; and opposite reasons, by way of answer, why they should not fear it.

OBJECT. 1. *First*, Because thereby we are deprived of the exercise of all our senses, so that whatever delight either our taste, smell, hearing, sight, or feeling hath afforded us, we shall enjoy the same no more, whilst, perhaps, many generations after us shall have the fruition thereof. .

Answ. 1. *First*, As the exercises of our senses afford opportunity of delight, so are they capable of annoying and grieving us. As the taste, by bitterness and sharpness, &c.; the smell, by noisome pollution, corruption, &c.; the hearing, by terrible and hideous noise, and evil tidings: the

sight, by loathsome affrighting and miserable appearances ; the feeling, by tedious pains, &c.

Again, we have had the benefit of surviving former generations, who were liable to what we are ; and so shall those who shall succeed us.

Object. 2. But that which aggravates the evil thereof, is a man's being cut off in the flower or strength of his age ; whereas, if he lived the common age of man, he should the more contentedly leave this life.

Answ. Why, what is a man ? Is he not a flower, and as grass, and the like ? And are they not cut off in their best state ? And may not God, when he walketh in, or vieweth his garden of human flowers, have as much liberty to crop them as men have of theirs ? Surely, yes ; for all are his.

Secondly, And though God permit some men to live as long as any ordinary course of nature ought, be it seventy years, (which is judged the most common) or more ; yet he hath not promised them so long life.

Thirdly, And though some live so long, yet considering the wars and plagues, and other diseases among men, it is not without reason thought, there are many more that die who hath not lived according to the course of nature.

Fourthly, As we conclude that no person better, or so well as the gardener, or such as sowed, planted, dressed, and frequently practised about the flowers and plants, knows when, and for

what reason, to gather and pluck up; so no person knoweth better, nor so well as God knows, when to cut or pluck up what he hath planted in the world; who doth all his actions upon good and weighty reasons, even greater and better than any gardener or other person hath, for what he doth in his concernment.

Object. 3. In death a man becomes a lothesome spectacle to all beholders, insomuch that the sight and smell of the survivors find not more noisome offence from, and account not more vilely of the most lothesome creature in the world, than of a dead and rotten corpse of mankind; and is not that very grievous, to become from a delightful companion, an abhorrence of all people?

Answ. 1. True, being dead, a man becomes a lothesome spectacle to all beholders. And do not many diseases, to which a man is incident in his life, effect the same in beholders?

2. Though man do become by death what is suggested, yet he hath no sense thereof; and in that is the proverb verified, ‘What the eye sees not, the heart rues not.’ For look on man in that case, (as we may) as a dead lump of corruption, and what of misery can we apply thereto? Who looks on a dunghill or a jakes, and saith, Alas! for its misery? The same feels not and knows not any: so that although the thoughts of such a condition by death, grieves us whilst living, yet in

that condition itself, we shall be free from such grief.

3. Again, consider that we were but earth before we had life, and being dead we return to our first estate: and though withal, we become for a season more impure and corrupt than barely earth, yet in time we shall become very dust, when the putrifaction is consumed: and in that sense (but especially in a more excellent) will that saying be fulfilled, to wit, "Corruption shall put on incorruption."

Object. 4. Death deprives man of his society with whom he hath had sweet converse.

Answ. 1. True, but it is in order (if he die in God's favour) to enjoy, in due season, better society than men on earth have.

2. Besides, as thou lovest thy friends on earth, so thou art rid of thine enemies there too.

Object. 5. Though death may make way for better society than we have been used to here, yet who knows when that shall be: the body being not to receive new life till the general resurrection, which may be very long delayed.

Answ. Suppose it be so (as the most of Christians believe) that the best part of man receives glory and happiness immediately after death; yet, from the time of death to the general resurrection, (at which time all knowing Christians believe the reward of the righteous will not fail) the space be-

twixt death and it is but one day ; as he who by means of apoplexy, or like occasion, sleeps many days and nights without waking, cannot esteem of the time he hath slept, answerable to the measure thereof, but it may be to him, as one day or night : and in this sense may death be reckoned (as usually it is in holy Scripture) a sleep.

Object. 6. Suppose a man should die by the hand of a cruel man-slayer, who delights in torturing and destroying the body of man, as hath been seen ; would not the conceit of one so cruel, coming to act his mind upon a person, make the thoughts of such a death more terrible, when therein a man is no more regarded than a dog, or the vilest creature ?

Answ. 1. Yea, but do not many, by reason of wounds and gangrened members, in their life, for preserving the body, limbs, or members, endure as great pain, and tremble as much at the sight of the chirurgeon, when he comes to do his office on them, as a man doth at the sight of the executioner to do his ? and consider that all that is commonly done at such a death, causeth less pain for the party, than what some do suffer by cutting off one limb, in curing some wound or disease.

2. Again, consider the more of torment a man endures in this life, whether at death or otherwise, the less he is like to suffer after this life ; and the more blessing he is likely then to enjoy, if he be a good or worthy man, suffering here as a child

of God, and not as a reprobate, Rev. xxviii. 6 and xx. 4—6.

Object. 7. But in our present estate we have being, life, sense, and reason; and in death, we shall have (at the most) only being; and is not that very grievous to consider, that we shall be reduced to no better a condition than a piece of earth or stone?

Ans. It is true, that the consideration thereof is very grievous in itself; but yet whilst man hath reason as well as being, life, and sense, let him use it to consider also, that he hath no more cause to complain, than for a piece of the earth he now treads on, if it should please God (as at the first) to create thereof a man like himself, and shortly reduce it to its former state; for thus it is now with mankind in general.

Object. 8. It is confessed, that there is a proverb, 'For one pleasure a thousand dollars,' but it seems no better than a flourish of learned men to colour over a bad matter; for although the miseries of man in this life are not many yet if the benefits therein did not surmount those miseries, it is likely that men would not so much desire to continue therein, as they now do: and therefore, who would not fear death?

Ans. 1. Suppose it to be granted that the proverb is but a flourish, and that the benefits of this life do surmount the miseries thereof, yet no man is able to say, how long a person, in order to be

happy, should live here to enjoy those benefits ; but God he knows, and he hath appointed for mer once to die : therefore rest satisfied in his wisdom, for disposing of thy time for death, concluding that the same shall be in its due season.

2. Again, consider that it is God's prerogative over all his creatures, to dispose of them how, and when he will.

3. Moreover, God hath already set the bounds of thy life, beyond which thou canst not pass ; wherefore, patiently commit thyself to him in well-doing, and quietly satisfy thyself with his pleasure ; making of necessity a virtue ; for it is in vain for a man to strive against the stream, by tormenting himself with that which he cannot avoid : yet this doth not hinder that all men may, yea, ought to use what lawful means God gives them opportunity of, for saving their lives.

Object. 9. Well, though it be granted, that these answers, which have been urged, have (most if not all of them) common reason and experience on their side ; yet there remains further grounds to fear death, as well from what the holy Scriptures, as nature or custom doth evidence ; and that in part in this, to wit, death is reckoned the king of terrors, as Job xviii. 14. compared with Heb. ii. 15.

Ans. Death is indeed granted to be the king of terrors, but that is in regard of a certain sting that is in it : if that sting be taken away, death

will not be so terrible as before; yea, it will be rather gain than loss to die, if that sting reach not the party dying.

Object. 10. I confess there may seem to be some comfort in that answer, if one knew how to escape that sting, but that is a thing so difficult, that I greatly fear death; if I were sufficiently provided in that case, I should have comfort.

Ans. It is true, that the difficulty lies even there where it is expressed; but though it be so difficult, yea, impossible with man, yet it is not so difficult with God; he hath sufficiently provided for man in that case; for he that is King of kings, hath subdued that king of terrors, and done what is needful for a man concerning the same: for which purpose see these scriptures, to wit, 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. John iii. 14—17. and part of 18. Rom. v. 12, and forward to the end of the chapter.

Object. 11. I grant it appears plain enough, that there is, through Jesus Christ, victory wrought over the enemy mentioned, and answerable, the sting being taken away that I feared: I say, taken away from some, but it seems not from all, because it is said, “the sting of death is sin;” so that where sin is, there is the sting also: and I know myself a sinner, and therefore in danger of that sting.

Ans. Indeed, if thou knowest thyself a sinner,

and grieve not for it, but art therewith content, neither repenting of, nor reforming from it, I cannot say the sting of death is taking away from thee; but if thou dost truly repent of thy sins, and endeavour with thy heart to forsake sin, the sting of death is taken away from thee; for the Scripture tell us, Christ died for sinners; that is to say, humble penitent sinners, not for obstinate ones. A notable example whereof was manifested, when the Saviour of the world himself was held up; to wit, in that of the two thieves: the one railed on Christ, and was reprov'd; the other humbled himself, he also prayed, and received the answer of salvation.

Object. 12. Indeed that example, methinks, doth tend to prove what you say: but in so considerable a case as this, a man would desire more than one witness.

Answ. Therefore take more, to wit, Prov. viii. 13. Isa. l. 17—19. Matth. ix. 12, 13. Rom. v. 8. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.

Some further grounds whereon a poor sinner may expect mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

FIRST, Through a sense of sin, so look on the Lord Christ, as those who were stung with the scorpions in the wilderness did on the brazen serpent.

Next followeth the humbling of the soul, the effects of which is to be seen in these scriptures;

to wit, Job xxii. 29. Psal. x. 17. Isa. lv. 15. James iv. 6.

Which humiliation begets a self-examination, by which knowing the holy rule of life, and comparing a man's life to that rule, trying how his case is, he is thereby ready to say, (in respect to his misery) as the apostle doth, Rom. vii. 9—11. He seeth himself a dead man in the sense of the law.

Then that works in him a holy sorrow, and that of repentance not to be repented of, to wit, repentance to salvation, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

It brings him to see, not only that he is a condemned or guilty person, but that he is irrecoverably lost, and must needs perish, without some person as a mediator or redeemer, do undertake for his ransom, or hath undertaken it; for that God is infinitely just, and he must have his justice satisfied; and all that the poor soul can do, is but to amend his life for the future, walking more conformable to the righteous law of God than heretofore. But alas! that is no more than what we ought to be for the time to come; it will not satisfy divine justice for the transgression already done against the law of God, any more than a man's paying another an ensuing week, month, or year, for all he is engaged in for within the space of time, doth satisfy and clear the debt, which became due in time before that week. Neither, indeed, can a man of himself satisfy for what he

shall owe to it in the remaining part of his life. Now this consideration works the soul into a melting frame, brings him on his knees to say, as the poor publican, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner:" and as the prodigal humbled, and sees all his rambling shifts in vain, for yielding him that solid comfort his soul thirsteth after, therefore resolves to go home to his father; and although he may look upon him as enraged against him, (for which his soul knew there was just cause) yet he goes humbling himself to his father, saying, "Father, I have sinned, &c. and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Now observe the success, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And further entertained him, not as a servant, as he humbly besought, (for the humble shall be exalted) but as a son, and rejoiced in him, Luke xv. 18—20.

The Assyrians also well knew what good this humble application was likely to effect in an Israelitish king, 1 Kings xx. 31, 32. And if mercy be expected from one of these kings, then much more may it be from the Supreme, the King of those kings, the Almighty who hath promised large graces to humble souls.

So Esther, at the advice of Mordecai, chap iv. 5. made good proof of this humble way of addressing for mercy, in a case otherwise desperate; the success whereof was the royal sceptre holden forth with

grace, to grant even beyond the petition, though she knew not when she went about it, but that she should perish ; yet wisely perceiving that she must perish, if she had not so applied, she proceeded.

Thus it was with the lepers, 2 Kings vii. 4. If they went into the city, they should suffer famine, if they stayed where they were, they must die ; they therefore would venture for relief among their enemies, being sure they could not be worse than they were, they could but die one way or another. So when the soul is thus brought to see its own misery, and humbleth itself thoroughly, and withal is willing to embrace what means soever represents so much as a possibility of saving it ; then God shews his mercy to refresh it, according to Isa. lvii. 15, 16, &c. “To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones.” So Psal. li. 15. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. and forward. And Christ comfortably invites such a poor sinner, that is weary and heavy laden with the sense of his sin, he invites him to come and receive rest : and thus the gospel doth in general give encouragement to humble and penitent sinners, to expect salvation from the eternal God, the sting before spoken of being taken away.

Then being truly humbled under a sense of that miserable condition, which sin hath made a man liable to, and being rightly desirous of salvation,

that which is required of him, is only to believe that the righteous God, who might have made him eternally miserable, hath, notwithstanding, through his tender compassions, (his mercy being above all his works) resolved on a way to satisfy his justice, by acquitting the guilty, who was no way able to pay a sufficient ransom for his own redemption, therefore provided a price satisfactory to redeem poor fallen man from the curse; concerning which, both the apostles and prophets have witnessed, Isa. liii. and lv. chapters; Micah v. 2. Hos. xi. 1. Psal. xxii. Acts i. 8. and x. 41. and more scriptures; that price of salvation, Jesus Christ; of whom the angels proclaimed, about the time of his entrance into the world, "Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men," Luke ii. 14. And the evangelist John, (chapter iii. 16.) declares positively, "That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life."

This is the term of salvation, to wit, believing in his Son to be that gift and ransom which the gospel generally holds forth to those who would know what they should do to be saved; withal there must be an obedient conversation, and that universally to all God's commandments, answerable to a poor soul's ability, so long as life may last.



THE
CHRISTIAN SOLDIER;

OR

HEAVEN TAKEN BY STORM.

By THOMAS WATSON,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

REVISED AND CORRECTED

By THE REV. R. ARMSTRONG.

"I PRESS TOWARDS THE MARK"—*Phil* iii 14.

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TO THE READER.

I DO not pretend to have a name sufficient to confer celebrity on an Author whose fame is not already established; nor have I the least intention to promote the interest of a party, which is often putting a sword into the hand of one Christian to wound the peace of another. My design is, to introduce a book, which appears to be well calculated to promote practical religion and genuine piety—to promote an intercourse between heaven and earth; that the soul, by drawing near to God, may be changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord.

This Writer has been much admired for his energy of style, and his easy and familiar illustrations: and many who have read the Life of Colonel Gardiner, have wished to see this treatise, which he had in his hand when God was pleased to work that wonderful change; which Dr. Doddridge thus relates: “But it very accidentally happened, that he took up a religious book, which his good mother or aunt had, without his knowledge, slipped into his portmanteau. It was called, if I remember right, *The Christian Soldier, or Heaven taken by Storm*, and was

written by Mr. Thomas Watson. Guessing, by the title of it, that he should find some phrases of his own profession spiritualized, in a manner which he thought might afford him some diversion, he resolved to dip into it; but he took no serious notice of any thing he read in it, and yet while this book was in his hand, an impression was made upon his mind, (perhaps God only knows how) which drew after it a train of the most important and happy consequences." That it may now be attended with the same happy consequences, is the earnest prayer of

R. ARMSTRONG

HEAVEN TAKEN BY STORM.

MATTHEW XI. 13.

The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

JOHN Baptist hearing in prison the fame of Christ, sends two of his disciples to him with this question, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” ver. 3. Not (as Tertullian thinks) that John Baptist knew not that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah; for he was confirmed in this both by the Spirit of God, and by a sign from heaven, John i. 33. But John Baptist hereby endeavoured to correct the ignorance of his own disciples, who had a greater respect for him than for Christ.

In the fourth verse Christ answers their question, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,” &c. Jesus Christ demonstrates himself to be the true Messiah by his miracles, which were real and ocular proofs of his divinity. John’s disciples being departed, Christ falls into an high eulogium and commendation of John Baptist, ver. 7. “What went ye out in the wilderness to see, a

reed shaken with the wind?" As if Christ had said, John Baptist was no inconstant man, fluctuating in his mind, and being shaken as a reed from one opinion to another; he was no Reuben, "unstable as water," but was fixed and resolute in religion, and a prison could make no alteration in him.—Ver. 8. "But what went ye out for to see, a man cloathed in soft raiment?" John did not indulge his senses; he wore not silks, but camels hair; nor did he affect to live at court, but in a wilderness, Matt. iii. 3, 4.

Again, Christ commends John as being his fore runner, who prepared the way before him; verse 10. He was the morning star which did precede the Sun of Righteousness; and that Christ might sufficiently honour this holy man, he doth not only parallel him with, but prefer him before the chief of the prophets. Verse 9. "What went ye out for to see, a prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." Verse 11. "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist:" he was eminent both for dignity of office, and perspicuity of doctrine; and so the text is ushered in: "from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." In which words there is,

I. The preface or introduction: "from the days of John the Baptist, until now." John Baptist was a zealous preacher, a Boanerges, or son of

thunder, and after his preaching, people began to be awakened out of their sins.

Hence learn, what kind of ministry is like to do most good, namely, that which works upon the consciences of men. John Baptist did lift up his voice like a trumpet; he preached the doctrine of repentance with power, Matt. iii. 2. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" he came hewing and cutting down men's sins, and afterwards preached Christ to them. First he poured in the vinegar of the law, then the wine of the Gospel. This was that preaching which made men studiously seek after heaven. John did not so much preach to please, as to profit; he chose rather to discover men's sins, than to shew his own eloquence. That is the best looking-glass, not which is most gilded, but which shews the truest face. That preaching is to be preferred, which makes the truest discovery of men's sins, and shews them their hearts. John Baptist "was a burning and shining light;" he did burn in his doctrine, and shine in his life; and from that time men pressed into heaven. Peter, (who was filled with a spirit of zeal) having humbled his hearers for their sins, and opened to them a fountain in Christ's blood, they were then "pricked at their heart," Acts ii. 37. It is the greatest mercy to have a soul-searching ministry. If one had a desperate wound, he would desire to have it searched to the

bottom : who would not be content to have their souls searched, so they may have them saved ?

2. The matter in the text, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." What is meant by the kingdom of heaven ?—Some interpret it of the doctrine of the Gospel, which reveals Christ and heaven ; so Erasmus : but I rather by the kingdom of heaven understand glory ; and so learned Beza and others. This kingdom "suffereth violence." It is a metaphor from a town or castle that holds out in war, and is not taken but by storm. So the kingdom of heaven will not be taken without violence ; "the violent take it by force."

The earth is inherited by the meek, Matt. v. 5. Heaven is inherited by the violent. Our life is military, Christ is our Captain, the Gospel is the banner, the graces are our spiritual artillery, and heaven is only taken in a forcible way. The words fall into two parts.

1. The combat, "suffereth violence."

2. The conquest, "the violent take it by force."

Observation.—The right way to take heaven is by storm : or thus, None get into heaven but violent ones. This violence hath a double aspect.

It concerns men as magistrates ; they must be violent,

1. In punishing the guilty. When Aaron's Urim and Thummim will do no good, then must

Moses come with his rod. The wicked are the bad humours and surfeit of the commonwealth, which by the care of magistracy are to be purged out. God hath placed governors for the terror of evil doers, 1 Pet. ii. 14. They must not be like the sword-fish, which hath a sword in his head, but is without an heart. They must not have a sword in their hand, but no heart to draw it out for the cutting down of impiety. Connivance in a magistrate supports vice, and by not punishing offenders he adopts other men's faults, and makes them his own. Magistracy without zeal, is like the body without spirits. Too much lenity emboldens sin, and doth but shave the head which deserves to be cut off.

2. In defending the innocent. The magistrate is the assylum or altar of refuge for the oppressed to fly to. Charles Duke of Calabria was so in love with doing justice, that he caused a bell to be hung at his palace gate, which whosoever did ring, was sure presently to be admitted into the duke's presence, or have some officers sent out to hear his cause. Aristides was famous for his justice, of whom the historian saith, he would never favour any man's cause, because he was his friend: nor do injustice to any, because he was his enemy. The magistrates balance is the oppressed man's shield.

This violence concerns men as Christians. Though heaven be given us freely, yet we must

contend for it, Eccles. ix. 10. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

Our work is great, our time short, our master urgent; we had need therefore summon together all the powers of our souls, and strive as in a matter of life and death, that we may arrive at the kingdom above; we must not only put forth diligence, but violence. For the illustrating and clearing the proposition I shall shew,

1. What violence is not meant here: this violence in the text excludes, 1. An ignorant violence; to be violent for that which we do not understand, Acts xvii. 23. "As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God." These Athenians were violent in their devotion: but it might be said to them, as Christ said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 22. "Ye worship ye know not what." Thus the papists are violent in their religion, witness their penance, fasting, dilacerating themselves till the blood comes, but it is a "zeal without knowledge:" their metal is better than their eye-sight. When Aaron was to burn the incense upon the altar, he was first to light the lamps, Exod. xxx. 7. When zeal like incense burns, first the lamp of knowledge must be lighted.

2. It excludes a bloody violence, which is twofold: first, when one goes to lay violent hands upon himself. The body is an earthly prison

where God hath put the soul: we must not break prison, but stay till God by death lets us out. The centinal is not to stir without leave from his captain; nor must we dare to stir hence, without God's leave. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 19; when we offer violence to them, we destroy God's temple. The lamp of life must burn so long as any natural moisture is left like oil to feed it.

Secondly, When one takes away the life of another. There is too much of this violence now-a-days. No sin hath a louder voice than blood, Gen. iv. 10. "The voice of thy brother's blood cryeth unto me from the ground." If there is a curse for him that "smites his neighbour secretly," (Deut. xxvii. 24.) then he is doubly cursed that kills him. If a man had slain another unawares, he might take sanctuary, and fly to the altar; but if he had done it willingly, the holiness of the place was not to protect him, Exod. xxi. 14. "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." Joab being a man of blood, King Solomon sought to slay him, though he caught hold on the horns of the altar, 1 Kings viii. 29. In Bohemia formerly, the murderer was to be beheaded, and put in the same coffin with him whom he killed. Thus we see what violence the text excludes.

2. What violence is meant here; it is an hard

violence. This is two-fold, 1. We must be violent for the truth. Here Pilate's question will be moved, what is truth? Truth is either the blessed word of God, which is called the word of truth; or those doctrinals which are deduced from the word, and agree with it as the dial with the sun, or the transcript with the original; as, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the creation, the doctrine of free grace, justification by the blood of Christ, regeneration, resurrection of the dead, and the life of glory. These truths we must be violent for, which is either by being advocates for them, or martyrs.

Truth is the most glorious thing; the least filing of this gold is precious: what shall we be violent for, if not for truth? Truth is ancient: its grey hairs may make it venerable; it comes from him who is the ancient of days. Truth is unerring, it is the star which leads to Christ. Truth is pure, (Psal. cxix. 140.) it is compared to silver refined seven times, Psal. xii. 6. There is not the least spot on truth's face; it breathes nothing but sanctity. Truth is triumphant; it is like a great conqueror, when all its enemies lye dead, it keeps the field, and sets up its trophies of victory. Truth may be opposed, but never quite deposed. In the time of Dioclesian, things seemed desperate; truth ran low; soon after was the golden time of Constantius, and then truth again lifted up its head. When the water in the

Thames is lowest, an high tide is ready to come in. God is on truth's side, and so long there is no fear but it will prevail: "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved," (2 Pet. iii. 12.) but not that truth which came from heaven, 1 Pet. i. 25.

Truth hath noble effects. Truth is the seed of the new birth. God doth not regenerate us by miracles, or revelations, but by the word of truth, James i. 18. As truth is the breeder of grace, so the feeder of it, 1 Tim. iv. 6. Truth sanctifies, John xvii. 17. "Sanctify them by thy truth." Truth is the seal that leaves the print of its own holiness upon us: it is both speculum and lavacrum, a glass to shew us our blemishes, and a laver to wash them away. Truth makes us free, (John viii. 32,) it beats off the fetters of sin, and puts us into a state of sonship, (Rom. viii. 11.) and kingship, Rev. i. 6. Truth is comforting: this wine cheers. When David's harp and viol could yield him no comfort, truth did, Ps. cxix. 50. "This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me." Truth is an antidote against error. Error is the adultery of the mind; it stains the soul as treason doth the blood.—Error damns as well as vice. A man may as well die by poison, as pistol; and what can stave off error but truth? The reason so many have been trepanned into error is, because they either did not know, or not love the truth. I can never say

enough in the honour of truth. Truth is the ground of our faith; it gives us an exact model of religion; it shews us what we are to believe. Take away truth, and our faith is fancy. Truth is the best flower in the church's crown. We have not a richer jewel to trust God with than our souls, nor he a richer jewel to trust us with than his truths. Truth is an ensign of honour; it distinguisheth us from the false church, as chastity distinguisheth a virtuous woman from an harlot. In short, truth is the bulwark of a nation, 2 Chron. xi. 17. It is said, the Levites (who were the antesignani, the ensign-bearers of truth) strengthened the kingdom. Truth may be compared to the capital of Rome, which was a place of the greatest strength; or the tower of David, on which there hang a thousand shields, Cant. iv. 4. Our forts and navies do not so much strengthen us as truth. Truth is the best militia of a kingdom; if once we part with truth, and espouse popery, the lock is cut where our strength lies. What then should we be violent for, if not for truth? We are bid to contend as in an agony "for the faith delivered to the saints," Jude ver. 3. If truth once be gone, we may write this epitaph on England's tomb-stone, "The Glory is departed."

2. This holy violence is when we are violent for our own salvation, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." The Greek word signifies anxious, carefulness, or

a serious beating one's thoughts about the business of eternity; such a care as sets head and heart at work: in this channel of religion all a Christian's zeal should run.

3. The third thing is, what is implied in this holy violence. It implies three things; 1. Resolution of will. 2. Vigour of affection. 3. Strength of endeavour.

1. Resolution of the will, Psalm cxix. 106. "I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Whatever is in the way to heaven (though there be a lion in the way) I will encounter it. Like a resolute commander that chargeth through the whole body of the army. The Christian is resolved, come on it what will, he will have heaven. Where there is this resolution, danger must be despised, difficulties trampled upon, terrors contemned. This is the first thing in holy violence, resolution of will; I will have heaven whatever it cost me; and this resolution must be in the strength of Christ.

Resolution is like the bias to the bow! which carries it strongly. Where there is but half a resolution, a will to be saved, and a will to follow sin, it is impossible to be violent for heaven. If a traveller be unresolved, sometimes he will ride this way, sometimes that; he is violent for neither.

2. Vigour of the affections. The will proceeds upon reason; the judgment being informed of

the excellency of a state of glory, and the will being resolved upon a voyage to that holy land, now the affections follow, and they are on fire in passionate longings after heaven. The affections are violent things, Ps. xlii. 2. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." The rabbins note here, that David saith not my soul hungrcth but thirsteth; because naturally we are more impatient of thirst than hunger. See in what a rapid violent motion David's affections were carried after God. The affections are like the wings of the bird, which make the soul swift in its flight after glory. Where the affections are stirred up there is offering violence to heaven.

3. This violence implies strength of endeavour, when we strive for salvation as about a matter of life and death. It is easy to talk of heaven, but not to get to heaven: we must put forth all our strength; nay, call in the help of heaven to the work.

4. The fourth thing is, how many ways a Christian must offer violence? four ways: he must offer violence, 1. To himself. 2. To the world. 3. To Satan. 4. To heaven.

1. He must offer violence to himself. This self-violence consists in two things.—1. Mortification of sin. 2. Provocation to duty.

1. Offering violence to one's self in a spiritual sense, consists in mortification of sin: self is the flesh; this we must offer violence to. Hierom,

Chrysostom, Theophilact do all expound taking heaven by force, the mortifying the flesh: the flesh is a bosom traitor; it is like the Trojan horse within the walls which doth all the mischief. The flesh is a sly enemy: at first it is sweet poison, afterwards a biting scorpion: it kills by embracing. The embraces of the flesh are like the ivy embracing the oak, which sucks out the strength of it for its own leaves and berries; so the flesh, by its soft embraces, sucks out all heart for good, Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." The pampering of the flesh, is the quenching of God's Spirit. The flesh choaks and stifles holy motions: the flesh sides with Satan, and is true to his interest. There is a party within that will not pray, that will not believe. The flesh inclines us more to believe a temptation than a promise: there needs no wind to blow to sin, when this tide within is so strong to carry us thither. The flesh being so near to us, its counsels are more attractive: no chain of adamant binds so fast as the chain of lust. Alexander, who was conqueror of the world, was led captive by vice. Now a man must offer violence to his fleshly desires, if he will be saved, Col. iii. 5. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" The mortifying and killing sin at the root, is when we not only forbear the acts of sin, but hate the in-being.

Nay, where sin hath received its deadly wound,

and is in part abated, yet the work of mortification is not to be laid aside. The apostle persuades the believing Romans to "mortify the deeds of the flesh," Rom. viii. 13.—In the best of saints there is something needs mortifying; much pride, envy, passion; therefore mortification is called crucifixion, (Gal. v. 24.) which is not done suddenly; every day some limb of the body of death must drop off. Nothing harder than a rock, (saith Cyrill) yet in the clefts thereof some weed or other will fasten its roots. None stronger than a believer; yet do what he can, sin will fasten its roots in him, and spring out sometimes by inordinate desires. There is something needs mortifying. Hence it was St. Paul did beat down his body by prayer, watching, fasting, 1 Cor. ix. 27. But, is it not said, Eph. v. 29. "No man ever hated his own flesh."

As flesh is taken physically for the bodily compasses or constitution, so it is to be cherished; but as flesh is taken theologically for the impure lustings of the flesh, so a man must hate his own flesh. The apostle saith, fleshly lusts "war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. If the flesh doth war against us, good reason we should war against the flesh.

How may one do to offer violence to himself in mortifying the flesh?

1. Withdraw the fuel that may make lust burn. Avoid all temptations. Take heed of that which

doth nourish sin. He that would suppress the gout or stone, avoids those meats which are noxious. They who pray they may not be led into temptation, must not lead themselves in temptation.

2. Fight against fleshly lusts with spiritual weapons—faith and prayer. The best way to combat with sin is upon our knees. Run to the promise, Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you:" or as the Greek word is, it shall not lord it. Beg strength of Christ, Phil. iv. 13. Sampson's strength lay in his hair, ours lie in our head, Christ. This is one way of offering violence to one's self by mortification. This is a mystery to the major part of the world, who do rather gratify the flesh than mortify it.

2. The second thing wherein offering violence to a man's self consists is, in provocation to duty. Then we offer only violence to ourselves, when we excite and provoke ourselves to that which is good. This is called in Scripture, a "stirring up ourselves to take hold of God," Isa. lxiv. 7. Consider,

1. What absolute need there is to stir up ourselves to holy duties.

In respect of the sluggishness of our hearts to that which is spiritual, blunt tools need whetting; a dull creature needs spurs. Our hearts are dull and heavy in the things of God, therefore we had need spur them on, and provoke them to that

which is good. The flesh hinders from duty; when we would pray, the flesh resists; when we should suffer, the flesh draws back. How hard is it sometimes to get leave of our hearts to seek God? Jesus Christ went more willingly to the cross, than we do to the throne of grace. Had not we need then provoke ourselves to duty? If our hearts are so unstrung in religion, we had need prepare and put them in tune.

The exercises of God's worship are contrary to nature; therefore there must be a provoking of ourselves to them. The motion of the soul to sin is natural, but its motion towards heaven is violent. The stone moves easily to the centre; it hath an innate propenseness downward; but to draw up a mill-stone into the air, is done by violence, because it is against nature: so to lift up the heart to heaven in duty, is done by violence, and we must provoke ourselves to it.

2. What it is to provoke ourselves to duty.

1. It is to awaken ourselves, and shake off spiritual sloth. Holy David awakens his tongue and heart when he went about God's service, Psalm lvii. 8. "Awake up, my glory, I myself will awake early." He found an inclination to sleep, and a dullness in his soul, therefore did provoke himself to duty. "I myself will awake early." Christians, though they are raised from the death of sin, yet often they fall asleep.

2. Provoking ourselves to duty, implies a unit-

ing and rallying together all the powers of our soul, and setting them on work in the exercises of religion. A man saith to his thoughts, Be you fixed on God in this duty; and to his affections, Do you serve the Lord without distraction. Matters of religion are done with intenseness of spirit.

3. The third thing is to shew the several duties of Christianity, wherein we must provoke and offer violence to ourselves: I shall name seven.

1. We must provoke ourselves to the reading of the word. What an infinite mercy is it that God hath honoured us with the Scriptures! The barbarous Indians have not the oracles of God made known to them: they have the golden mines, but not the Scriptures, which are more to be desired than much fine gold, Psal. xix. 10. Our Saviour bids us search the Scriptures, John 7. 39. We must not read these holy lines carelessly, as if they did not concern us, or run them over hastily, as Israel ate the passover in haste, but peruse them with reverence and seriousness. The noble Bereans did search the Scriptures daily, Acts xvii. 11. The Scripture is the pandect of divine knowledge; it is the rule and touchstone of truth; out of this well we draw the water of life. To provoke to a diligent reading of the word, labour to have a right notion of Scripture.

Read the word as a book made by God himself.

It is given "by divine inspiration," 2 Tim. iii. 16. It is the library of the Holy Ghost. The prophets and apostles were but God's amanuenses or notaries to write the law at his mouth. The word is of divine original, and reveals the deep things of God to us. That there is a numen or deity is engraven in man's heart, and is to be read in the book of the creatures; but who this God is, and the trinity of persons in the Godhead, is infinitely above the light of reason, only God himself could make this known. So for the incarnation of Christ, God and man hypostatically united in one person; the mystery of imputed righteousness; the doctrine of faith: what angel in heaven, who but God himself could reveal these things to us? How may this provoke to diligence and seriousness in reading the word which is divinely inspired. Other books may be made by holy men, but this book is indited by the Holy Ghost.

Read the word as a perfect rule of faith; it contains all things essential to salvation. I adore the fulness of Scripture, saith Tertullian. The word teacheth us how to please God; how to order our conversation in the world: it instructs us in all things that belong either to prudence or piety. How should we read the word with care and reverence, when it contains a perfect model and platform of religion, and is able to "make us wise to salvation," 2 Tim. iii. 17

When you read the word, look on it as a soul-enriching treasury. Search here as for a "vein of silver," Prov. ii. 4. In this word are scattered many divine aphorisms; gather them up as so many jewels. This blessed book helps to enrich you; it fills your head with knowledge, and your heart with grace; it stores you with promises. a man may be rich in bonds. In this field the pearl of price is hid: what are all the world's riches to these? Islands of spices, coasts of pearl, rocks of diamonds! These are but the riches that reprobates may have, but the word gives us those riches which angels have.

Read the word as a book of evidences. How carefully doth one read over his evidences? Would you know whether God be your God? search the record of Scripture, 1 John iii. 24. "Hereby we know he abides in us by his Spirit he hath given us." Would you know whether you are "heirs of the promise?" You must find it in these sacred writings, 2 Thess. ii. 13. "He hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification." They who are vessels of grace, shall be vessels of glory.

Look upon the word as a spiritual magazine, out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and Satan. 1. Here are weapons to fight against sin. The word of God is a consecrated sword, that cuts asunder the lusts of the heart. When pride begins to lift up itself, the

“sword of the spirit” destroys this sin, 1 Pet. v. 5. “God resists the proud.” When passion vents itself, the word of God, like Hercules club, beats down this angry fury, Eccles. v. 9. “Anger rests in the bosom of fools.” When lust boils, the word of God cools that intemperate heat, Eph. v. 5. “No unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.” 2. Here are weapons to fight against Satan. The word fenceth off temptation. When the devil tempted Christ, he three times wounded the old serpent, with the sword of the Spirit. It is written, Matt. iv. 7. Satan never sooner foils a Christian, than when he is unarmed, and without Scripture weapons.

Look upon the word as a spiritual glass to dress yourselves by: it is a looking-glass for the blind, Psal. xix. 8. In other glasses you may see your faces; in this glass you may see your hearts, Psal. cxix. 104. “Through thy precepts I get understanding.” This looking-glass of the word clearly represents Christ: it sets him forth in his person, nature, offices, as most precious and eligible, Cant. v. 16. He is altogether lovely; he is a wonder of beauty, a paradise of delight. Christ who was veiled over in types, is clearly revealed in the glass of the Scriptures.

Look upon the word as a book of spiritual receipts. Basil compares the word to an apothecary’s shop, which hath all kinds of medicines and

antidotes. If you find yourselves dead in duty, here is a recipe, Psal. cxix. 50. "Thy word hath quickened me." If you find your hearts hard, the word doth liquify and melt them: therefore it is compared to fire for its mollifying power, Jer. xxiii. 29. If you are poisoned with sin, here is an herb to expel it.

Look upon the word as a sovereign elixir to comfort you in distress; it comforts you against all your sins, temptations, and afflictions. What are the promises, but divine cordials to revive fainting souls. A gracious heart goes feeding on a promise as Sampson on the honey-comb, Judg. xiv. 9. The word comforts against sickness and death, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting?" A Christian dies embracing the promise, as Simeon did Christ, Heb. xi. 16.

Read the word as the last will and testament of Christ. Here are many legacies given to them that love him; pardon of sin, adoption, consolation; this will is in force, being sealed in Christ's blood. With what seriousness doth a child read over the will and testament of his father, that he may see what is left him.

Read it as a book by which you must be judged, John xii. 48. "The word I have spoken, shall judge him at the last day." They who live according to the rules of this book, shall be acquitted: they who live contrary to them, shall be condemned. There are two books God will go by,

the book of conscience, and the book of Scripture: the one shall be the witness, and the other the judge. How should every Christian then provoke himself to read this book of God with care and devotion !—This is that book which God will proceed by at the last. They who fly from the word as a guide, shall be forced to submit to it as a judge.

The second duty of religion, wherein we must provoke ourselves is, in hearing of the word. We may bring our bodies to the word with ease, but not our hearts, without offering violence to ourselves. When we come to the word preached, we come about a business of the highest importance, therefore should stir up ourselves and hear with the greatest devotion. Constantine the Emperor was noted for his reverend attention to the word, Luke xix. 48. “All the people were attentive to hear him.”—In the Greek it is, they hanged upon his lip. When the word is dispensed, we are now to lift up the everlasting doors of our hearts, that the King of Glory may enter in.

1. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who scarce mind what is said, as if they were not at all concerned in the business: they come to church more for custom than conscience, Ezekiel xxxiii. 31. “They come to thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but

they will not do them.” If we could tell them of a rich purchase, or of some place of preferment, they would diligently attend; but when the word of life is preached, they disregard it.

2. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who come to the word in a dull, drowsy manner, as if they came to church to take a receipt to make them sleep. The word is to feed; it is strange to sleep at meat. The word judgeth men; it is strange for a prisoner to fall asleep at the bar. To such sleepy hearers God may say, sleep on. He may suffer them to be so stupified, that no ordinance shall awaken them, Matt. xiii. 25. “While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares.” The devil is never asleep, but sows the tares of sin in a drowsy hearer.

That we may, when we come to the word, offer violence to ourselves, and stir up ourselves to hear with devotion, consider,

1. It is God that speaks to us. If a judge give a charge upon the bench, all listen. If a king speaks, all give attention. When we come to the word, we should think thus with ourselves, we are to hear God in this preacher. Therefore Christ is said, Now to speak to us from heaven, Heb. xii. 25. Christ speaks in his ministers, as a king speaketh in the person of his ambassador. When Samuel knew it was the Lord that spake

to him, he lent an ear, 2 Sam. iii. 5. "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." They who slight God speaking in his word, shall hear him speaking in his wrath, Psal. ii. 5. "Then shall he speak to them in his wrath."

2. Let us consider the weightiness of the matters delivered to us. As Moses said to Israel, (Deut. xxx. 19.) "I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death." We preach to men of Christ, and the eternal recompences; here are the magnalia legis, the weighty matters of the law; and doth not all this call for serious attention? There is a great deal of difference between a letter of news read to us, and a letter of special business, wherein our whole land and estate is concerned. In the word preached, our salvation is concerned; here we are instructed to the kingdom of God; and if ever we will be serious, it should be now, Deut. xxxii. 47. "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."

3. If the word be not regarded, it will not be remembered. Many complain they cannot remember; here is the reason; God punisheth their carelessness in hearing, with forgetfulness. He suffers Satan to take away the word from them, Matt. xiii. 4. "The fowls of the air came and devoured the seed." The devil is no recusant; he comes to church, but it is not for any good

intent ; he gets away the word from men !—How many have been robbed of the sermon and their souls both at once.

4. It may be the last time that ever God will speak to us in his word : it may be the last sermon that ever we shall hear ; and we may go from the place of hearing, to the place of judging. Did people think thus when they come into the house of God, perhaps this will be the last time that God will counsel us about our souls ; the last time that ever we shall see our minister's face, with what devotion would they come ! How would their affections be all on fire in hearing ! We give great attention to the last speeches of friends : a parent's dying words are received as oracles. Oh, let all this provoke us to diligence in hearing ! let us think this may be the last time that Aaron's bell shall sound in our ears, and before another day, we shall be in another world.

The third duty wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves, is in prayer. Prayer is a duty which keeps the trade of religion a going. When we either join in prayer with others, or pray alone, we must use holy violence ; not eloquence in prayer, but violence carries it. Theodorus speaking of Luther, "Once," said he, "I overheard him in prayer, but, good God, with what life and spirit did he pray ! It was with so much reverence as if he were speaking to God, yet

with so much confidence, as if he had been speaking to his friend." There must be a stirring up of the heart, 1. To prayer; 2. In prayer.

1. A stirring up of the heart to prayer, Job xi. 13. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him." This preparing our heart is by holy thoughts and ejaculations. The musician first tunes his instrument before he plays.

2. There must be a stirring up of the heart in prayer. Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and soul to God, which cannot be done aright without offering violence to one's self. The names given to prayer import violence. It is called "wrestling," (Gen. xxxii. 24.) and "pouring out the soul," (1 Sam. i. 15.) both which imply vehemency. The affliction is required as well as the invention. The apostle speaks of an effectual fervent prayer, which is a parallel phrase to offering violence.

Alas! how far are they from offering violence to themselves in prayer, 1. That give God a dead heartless prayer. God would not have the blind offered, Mal. i. 8. As good offer the blind as the dead. Some are half asleep when they pray; and will a sleepy prayer ever awaken God? Such as mind not their own prayers, how do they think that God should mind them? Those prayers God likes best which comes seething hot from the heart.

2. How far are they from offering violence, that give God distracted prayer? while they are praying, they are thinking of their shop and trade. How can ye shoot right whose eye is quite off the mark? Ezek. xxxiii. 31. "Their hearts go after their covetousness." Many are casting up their accounts in prayer, as Hierom once complained of himself. How can God be pleased with this? Will a king endure that while his subject is delivering a petition, and speaking to him, he should be playing with a feather? When we send our hearts on an errand to heaven, how often do they loiter and play by the way? This is matter of blushing; that we may offer violence to ourselves and by fervency feather the wing of prayer, let these things be duly weighed.

The majesty of God with whom we have to do. He sees how it is with us in prayer, whether we are deeply affected with those things we pray for. "The king came in to see the guests," Matt. xxii. 11. So when we go to pray, the King of glory comes in to see in what frame we are: he hath a window which looks into our breasts, and if he sees a dead heart, he may turn a deaf ear. Nothing will sooner make God's anger wax hot than a cold prayer.

Prayer without fervency and violence, is no prayer; it is speaking, not praying. Lifeless prayer is no more prayer, than the picture of a man is a man. To say a prayer is not to pray,

Aschanius taught his parrot the Lord's prayer. St. Ambrose saith well, "It is the life and affection in a duty that baptizeth it, and gives it a name." It is the violence and wrestling of the affections that make it a prayer, else it is no prayer. But a man may say as Pharoah, "I have dreamed a dream," Gen. xli. 15.

3. The zeal and violence of the affections in prayer best suits with God's nature. He is a Spirit, (John iv. 24.) and sure that prayer which is full of life and spirit, is the "savoury meat he loves," 1 Peter ii. 5. "Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." Spirituality and fervency in duty, is like the spirits of wine, which are the more refined part of the wine. Bodily exercise profits nothing. It is not the stretching of the lungs, but the vehemency of the desire makes music in God's ears.

4. Consider the need we have of those things which we ask in prayer. We come to ask the favour of God; and if we have not his love, all that we enjoy is cursed to us. We pray that our souls may be washed in Christ's blood; and if he wash us not, "we have no part in him." These are such mercies, that if God deny us, we are for ever undone; therefore what violence had we need put forth in prayer? When will a man be earnest, if not when he is begging for his life.

5. Let it provoke violence in prayer to con-

sider those things which we ask, God hath a mind to grant. If a son ask nothing but what his father is willing to bestow, he may be the more earnest in his suit. We go to God for pardon of sin, and no work more pleasing to him than to seal pardons. Mercy is his delight, Micah vii. 18. We pray to God for an holy heart, and this prayer is according to his will, 1 Thess. iv. 3. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." We pray that God would give us an heart to love him. How pleasing must this request needs be to God! This, if any thing may excite prayer, and carry it in a fiery chariot up to heaven, when we know we pray for nothing but what God is more willing to grant than we are to ask.

6. No mercy can be bestowed on us but in a way of prayer. Mercy is purchased by Christ's blood, but it is conveyed by prayer. All the promises are bonds made over to us, but prayer puts these bonds in suit. The Lord hath told Israel with what rich mercy he would bespangle them; he would bring them to their native country, and bring them thither with new hearts, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Yet this tree of the promise would not drop its fruit, till shaken with the hand of prayer, verse 37. "For all this will I yet be inquired." The breast of God's mercy is full, but prayer must draw the breast. Surely, if all other ways are blocked up, there is no good to be done without prayer; how should we ply this oar, and

by an holy violence stir up ourselves to take hold of God.

7. It is only violence and intenseness of spirit in prayer hath the promise of mercy affixed to it, Matt. vii. 7. "Knock and it shall be opened." Knocking is a violent motion. The *Ædiles* among the Romans had their doors always standing open, that all who had petitions might have free access to them. God's heart is ever open to fervent prayer. Let us then be fired with zeal, and with Christ pray yet more earnestly. It is violence in prayer makes heaven gates fly open, and fetcheth in whatever mercies we stand in need of.

8. The large returns God hath given to violent prayer. This dove sent to heaven, hath often brought an olive-leaf in its mouth, Ps. xxxiv. 6. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Crying prayer prevails. Daniel in the den prayed and prevailed. Prayer did shut the lion's mouth, and open the lion's den. Fervent prayer (saith one) hath a kind of omnipotency in it. Sozomen saith of Apollonius, that he never asked any thing of God in all his life that he obtained not. Sleidan reports of Luther that, perceiving the interest of religion to be low, he betook himself to prayer; at length rising off his knees, he came out of his closet triumphantly, saying to his friends, we have overcome, we have overcome. At which time it was observed, there came out a proclamation from Charles the Fifth, that none

should be further molested for the profession of the Gospel. How may this encourage us, and make us hoist up the sails of prayer, when others of the saints have had such good returns from the holy land.

1. That we may put forth this holy violence in prayer, it is requisite there be a renewed principle of grace. If the person be graceless, no wonder the prayer is heartless. The body while it is dead, hath no heat in it; while a man is dead in sin, he can have no heat in duty.

2. That we may be the more violent in prayer, it is good to pray with a sense of our wants. A beggar that is pinched with want, will be earnest in craving an alms. Christian, review thy wants: thou wantest an humble spiritual frame of heart: thou wantest the light of God's countenance: the sense of want will quicken prayer. That man can never pray fervently, that doth not pray feelingly. How earnest was Sampson for water, when he was ready to die, Judg. xv. 11. "I die for thirst."

3. If we would be violent in prayer, let us beg a violent wind. The Spirit of God is resembled to a "mighty rushing wind," Acts ii. 2. Then we are violent, when this blessed wind fills our sails, Jude ver. 20. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." If any fire be in our sacrifice, it comes down from heaven.

The fourth duty wherein we must offer violence

to ourselves, is meditation; a duty wherein the very heart and life-blood of religion lies. St. Bernard calls meditation, a bait by the way. And another saith meditation may be thus described; it is an holy exercise of the mind, whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them, and apply them to ourselves. In meditation there are two things.

1. A Christian's retiring of himself, a locking himself up from the world. Meditation is a work which cannot be done in a crowd.

2. It is a serious thinking on God. It is not a few transient thoughts that are quickly gone, but a fixing and staying the mind upon heavenly objects: this cannot be done without exciting all the powers of our souls, and offering violence to ourselves.

We are the more to provoke ourselves to this duty, because,

1. Meditation is so cross to flesh and blood. Naturally we shun holy meditation. To meditate on worldly-secular things, if it were all day, we can do it without any diversion; but to have our thoughts fixed on God, how hard do we find it: how do our hearts quarrel with this duty? what pleas and excuses have we to shift it off? The natural averseness from this duty shews, we are to offer violence to ourselves in it.

2. Satan doth what he can to hinder this duty. He is an enemy to meditation. The devil cares

not how much we hear, nor how little we meditate. Hearing begets knowledge, but meditation begets devotion. Meditation doth ballast the heart, and makes it serious; and Satan labours to keep the heart from being serious. What need therefore is there of offering violence to ourselves in this duty? But me-thinks I hear some say, when they sit alone they know not what to meditate of; I shall therefore furnish them with matter of meditation.

1. Meditate seriously upon the corruption of your nature. We have lost that pure quintessential frame of soul that once we had.—There is a sea of sin in us. Our nature is a source and seminary of all evil: like Peter's sheet, wherein were "wild beasts and creeping things," Acts x. 12. This sin cleaves to us as a leprosy. This original pollution makes us guilty before the Lord: and though we should never commit actual sin, this merits hell. The meditation of this would be a means to pull down our pride. Nay, even those that have grace have cause to walk humbly, because they have more corruption in them than grace: their dark side is broader than their light.

2. Meditate seriously upon the death and passion of Christ. His soul was over-cast with a cloud of sorrow when he was conflicting with his Father's wrath; and all this we should have suffered, Isa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our

transgressions." As David said, "Lo, I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done?" 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. So we have sinned, but this Lamb of God, what had he done?

1. The serious meditation of this would produce repentance. How could we look upon him "whom we have pierced," and not mourn over him? When we consider how dear our sins cost Christ; how should we shed the blood of our sins which shed Christ's blood.

2. The meditation of Christ's death would fire our hearts with love to Christ. What friend shall we love, if not him who died for us? His love to us made him cruel to himself. As Rebecca said to Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 13. "Upon me, upon me be the curse." So said Christ, "Upon me be the curse," that poor sinners may inherit the blessing.

3. Meditate on your evidences for heaven. What have you to shew for heaven, if you should die this night? 1. Was your heart ever thoroughly convinced of sin? Did you ever see yourself lost without Christ? Conviction is the first step to conversion, John viii. 16. 2. Hath God ever made you willing to take Christ upon his own terms? Zach. vi. 13. "He shall be a priest upon his throne." Are you as willing that Christ should be upon the throne of your heart to rule, as a priest at the altar to intercede? Are you willing to renounce those to sins which the bias of

your heart doth naturally incline? Can you set those sins as Uriah in the fore front of the battle to be slain? Are you willing to take Christ for better for worse; to take him with his cross; and to avouch Christ in the worst of times. 3. Have you the indwelling presence of the Spirit? If you have, what hath God's Spirit done in you? Hath it made you of another spirit; meek, merciful, humble? Is it a transforming Spirit? Hath it left the impress of its own holiness upon you? These are good evidences for heaven. By these, as by a spiritual touch-stone, you may know whether you have grace or no. Beware of false evidences. None are further from having the true pearl, than they that content themselves with the counterfeit.

4. Meditate upon the uncertainty of all sublunary comforts. Creature delights have their flux and reflux. How oft doth the sun of worldly pomp and grandeur go down at noon. Xerxes was forced to fly away in a small vessel, who but a little before wanted sea-room for his navy. We say every thing is mutable; but who meditates upon it? The world is resembled to a "sea of glass mingled with fire," Rev. xv. 2. Glass is slippery; it hath no sure footing: and glass mingled with fire is subject to consume. All creatures are fluid and uncertain, and cannot be made to fix. What is become of the glory of Athens, or the pomp of Troy? 1 John ii. 17.

“The world passeth away:” it slides away as a ship in full sail. How quickly doth the scene alter, and a low ebb succeed an high tide? There is no trusting to any thing: health may be turned to sickness; friends may die; riches may take wings. We are ever upon the tropics. The serious meditation of this would,

1. Keep us from being so deceived by the world. We are ready to set up our rest here. Psal. xlix. 11. “Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever.” We are apt to think that our “mountain stands strong.” We dream of an earthly eternity. Alas! did we meditate how casual and uncertain these things are, we should not be so often deluded. Have not we seen great disappointments, and where we have thought to suck honey, there we have drank wormwood?

2. The meditation of the uncertainty of all things under the sun, would much moderate our affections to them. Why should we so eagerly pursue an uncertainty? Many take care to get a great estate; it is uncertain whether they shall keep it. The fire may break in where the thief cannot: or if they do keep it, it is a question whether they shall have the comfort of it. They lay up for a child; that child may die; or if he live, he may prove a burden. This, seriously meditated on, would cure the dropsy of covetousness; and make us sit loose to that which hangs so loose, and is ready to drop off from us.

3. The meditation of this uncertainty would make us look after a certainty; that is, the getting of grace. This holy "anointing abides," 1 John ii. 27. Grace is a flower of eternity. Death doth not destroy grace, but transplant it, and make it grow in a better soil. He that hath true holiness, can no more lose it than the angels can which are fixed stars in glory.

5. Meditate of God's severity against sin. Every arrow in God's quiver is shot against it. Sin burned Sodom, and drowned the old world. Sin kindles hell. If when a spark of God's wrath flies into a man's conscience, it is so terrible, what is it then when God stirs up all his wrath? Psal. lxxviii. 39. The meditation of this would fright us out of our sins. There cannot be so much sweetness in sin, as there is sting. How dreadful is God's anger! Psal. xc. 11. "Who knoweth the power of his wrath?" All fire compared with the fire of God's wrath is painted and imaginary. O that every time we meddle with sin, we would think with ourselves we choose the bramble, and fire will come out of this bramble to devour us.

6. Meditate on eternal life, 1 John ii. 25. "This is his promise, even eternal life." Life is sweet, and this word "eternal" makes it sweeter. This lies in the immediate vision and fruition of God.

1. This is a spiritual life: it is opposite to that animal life which we live now. Here we hunger and thirst; but there we shall "hunger no more,"

Rev. vii. 16. There is the marriage supper of the Lamb, which will not only satisfy hunger, but prevent it. That blessed life to come doth not consist in sensual delights, meat, and drink, and music; nor in the comfort of relations; but the soul will be wholly swallowed up in God, and acquiesce in him with infinite complacency. As when the sun appears, the stars vanish: so when God shall appear in his glory, and fill the soul, then all earthly sensitive delights shall vanish.

2. It is a glorious life. The bodies of the saints shall be enamelled with glory: "they shall be made like Christ's glorious body," Phil. iii. 21. And if the cabinet be of such curious needle-work, how rich shall the jewel be that is put into it! how bespangled with glory shall the soul be! Every saint shall wear his white robe, and have his throne to sit upon. Then God will put some of his own glory upon the saints. Glory shall not only be revealed to them, but in them, Rom. viii. 18. And this life of glory shall be crowned with eternity; what angel can express it! O let us often meditate on this!

1. The meditation of eternal life would make us labour for a spiritual life. The child must be born before it is crowned. We must be "born of the Spirit," before we are crowned with glory.

2. The meditation of eternal life would comfort us in regard of the shortness of natural life. Our life we live now, flies away as a shadow: it is call-

ed a “flower,” Psal. ciii. 15. a “vapour,” James iv. 14. Job sets forth fragil life very elegantly in three of the elements, land, water, air, Job ix. 25, 26. Go to the land, and there man’s life is like a swift post. Go to the water, there man’s life is like a ship under sail. Look to the air, and there man’s life is like a flying eagle. We are hastening to the grave. When our years do increase, our life doth decrease. Death creeps upon us by degrees. When our sight grows dim, then death creeps in at the eye. When our hearing is bad, then death creeps in at the ear. When our legs tremble under us, then is death pulling down the main pillars of the house; but eternal life comforts us against the shortness of natural life. That life to come is subject to no infirmities: it knows no period. We shall be as the angels of God, capable of no mutation or change. Thus you have seen six noble subjects for your thoughts to expatiate upon.

But where is the meditating Christian? Here I might lament the want of holy meditation. Most people live in a hurry; they are so distracted with the cares of the world, that they can find no time to meditate; or scarce ask their souls how they do. We are not like the saints in former ages. David did meditate in “God’s precepts,” Psal. cxix. 15. “Isaac walked in the evening to meditate,” Gen. xxiv. 63. He did take a turn with God. What devout meditations do we read in St. Aus-

tin and Anselm? but it is too much out of date among our modern Christians. Their stars have left the earth.

Those beasts under the law which did not chew the cud were unclean. Such as do not chew the cud by holy meditation, are to be reckoned among the unclean. But I shall rather turn my lamentation into a persuasion, intreating Christians to offer violence to themselves in this so necessary duty of meditation. Pythagorus sequestered himself from all society, and lived in a cave for a whole year, that he might meditate upon philosophy. How then should we retire and lock up ourselves at least once a day, that we might meditate upon glory.

1. Meditation makes the word preached to profit; it works it upon the consciences. As the bee sucks the flower, so by meditation we suck out the sweetness of a truth. It is not the receiving of meat into the mouth; but the digesting of it makes it nutritive. So it is not the receiving the most excellent truths in at the ear, that nourisheth our souls, but the digesting them by meditation. Wine poured into a sieve runs out. Many truths are lost, because ministers pour this wine into sieves, either into leaking memories, or feathery minds. Meditation is like a soaking rain, that goes to the root of a tree, and makes it bring forth fruit.

2. Holy meditation quickens the affections, Psal.

cxix. 97. "O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day." The reason our affections are so cold to heavenly things, is because we do not warm them at the fire of holy meditation! As the musing on amorous objects makes the fire of lust burn, the musing on injuries makes the fire of revenge burn; so meditating on the transcendent beauties of Christ would make our love to Christ flame forth.

3. Meditation hath a transforming power in it. The hearing of the word may affect us; but the meditating of it doth transform us. Meditation stamps the impression of divine truths upon our hearts. By meditating of God's holiness, we grow holy. As Jacob's cattle, by looking on the rods, conceive like the rods: so while by meditation we look upon God's purity, we are changed into his likeness, and are made partakers of his divine nature.

4. Meditation produceth reformation, Psa. cxix. 59. "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Did but people meditate on the damnableness of sin; did they but think when they meddle with it, there is a rope at the end of it, which will hang them eternally in hell, they would break off a course of sinning, and become new creatures. Let all this persuade to holy meditation. I dare be bold to say, if men would spend but one quarter of an hour every day in contemplating heavenly objects, it would

leave a mighty impression upon them, and through the blessing of God might prove the beginning of an happy conversion. But how shall we do to meditate?

Get a love to spiritual things. We usually meditate on those things which we love. The voluptuous man can muse on his pleasures: the covetous man on his bags of gold. Did we love heavenly things, we should meditate more on them. Many say they cannot meditate, because they want memory; but is it not rather because they want affection? Did they love the things of God, they would make them their continual study and meditation.

The fifth duty wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves, is self-examination; a duty of great importance: it is a parlying with one's own heart, Psal. lxxvii. 7. "I commune with my own heart." David did put interrogatories to himself. Self examination is the setting up a court in conscience, and keeping a register there, that by a strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition; a bringing one's self to trial. A good Christian doth as it were begin the day of judgment here in his own soul. Self-searching is an heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the intestina, the inward parts, the heart, liver, arteries; so a Christian anatomizeth himself; he

searcheth what is flesh, and what is spirit; what is sin, and what grace, Ps. lxxvii. 7. "My spirit made diligent search:" as the woman in the Gospel did light a candle and search for her lost groat, (Luke xv. 8.) so conscience "is the candle of the Lord," Prov. xx. 27. A Christian by the light of this candle must search his soul if he can find any grace there. The rule by which a Christian must try himself, is the word of God. Fancy and opinion are false rules to go by. We must judge of our spiritual condition, by the canon of Scripture. This David calls a "lamp unto his feet," Ps. cxix. 105. Let the word be thy umpire to decide the controversy whether we have grace or not. We judge of colours by the sun; so we must judge of the estate of our souls by the light of Scripture.

Self-examination is a great duty incumbent; it requires self-excitation: it cannot possibly be done without offering violence to ourselves,

1. Because the duty in itself is difficult. 1st. It is a work of self-reflection; it lies most with the heart. It is hard to look inward. External acts of religion are easy; to lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer: this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to turn in upon his own soul, to take the heart as a watch all in pieces, and see what is defective; this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can

see every thing but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own. 2nd. Examination of a man's self is difficult, because of of self-love. As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters. Every man is ready to think the best of himself. What Solomon saith of love to our neighbour, is most true of self-love; it "hides a multitude of evil," Prov. x. 12. A man looking upon himself in the glass of self-love, his virtues appear greater than they are, and his sins less. Self-love makes one rather excuse what is amiss, than examine it.

2. As examination is in itself difficult, so it is a work which we are very hardly brought to. That which causeth a backwardness to self-examination is,

1st. Consciousness of guilt. Sin clamours inwardly, and men are loth to look into their hearts, lest they should find that which should trouble them. It is little pleasure to read the hand-writing on the wall of conscience. Many Christians are like tradesmen that are sinking in their estates; they are loth to look over their books, or cast up their accounts, lest they should find their estates low. So they are loth to look into their guilty hearts, lest they should find something there which should affright them; as Moses was affrighted at the sight of the rod turned into a serpent.

2nd. Men are hardly brought to this duty, be-

cause of foolish presumptuous hopes: they fancy their estate to be good; and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass for current. Many take their salvation on trust. The foolish virgins thought they had had oil in their lamps as well as the wise, Matt. xxv. Some are not sure of their salvation, but secure. If one were to buy a piece of land, he would not take it upon trust, but examine the title. How confident are some of salvation, yet never examine their title to heaven.

3rd. Men are not forward to examine themselves, because they rest in the good opinion of others; how vain is this! Alas! one may be gold and pearl in the eye of others; yet God may judge him reprobate silver: others may think him a saint, and God may write him down in his black book. Judas was looked upon by the rest of the apostles as a true believer; they would have been ready to have given their hands to his certificate, yet he was a traitor. Standers-by can but see the outward carriage; they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run on the top of a river, but vermin may lie at the bottom.

4th. Men are hardly brought to examine themselves, because they do not believe Scripture. The Scripture saith, "the heart is deceitful above all things," Jer. xvii. 9. Solomon said there were four things too wonderful for him, that he

could not know, Prov. xxx. 19. He might have added a fifth; the way of man's heart. The heart is the greatest impostor; it will be ready to put one off with seeming grace, instead of saving. The heart will persuade that a slight tear is repentance; a lazy desire is faith. Now because the generality of people do not believe that there is such fallacy in their hearts, therefore they are so slow to examine them. This natural backwardness in us to self-reflection, should cause us to offer the more violence to ourselves in making a thorough disquisition and search of our hearts.

Oh that I might prevail with Christians, to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination! Their salvation depends on it. It is the note of an harlot; she is seldom at home, Prov. vii. 11, 12. "Her feet abide not in her house; now she is without, now in the streets." It is a sign of an harlot professor, to be altogether abroad, spying the faults of others, but is never at home with his own heart. Oh let us try our hearts, as we do gold by the touchstone! Let us examine our sins, and finding out this leaven, burn it. Let us examine our grace, whether it be of the right kind. One went into the field to gather herbs, and he gathered wild gourds, and then death was in the pot, 2 Kings iv. 40. So many think they have grace, the right herb, but it proves a wild gourd, and brings death and damnation. That we may offer violence to ourselves in

this great business of examination, let these few things be seriously weighed.

1. Without self-examination we can never know how it is with us. If we should die presently, we cannot tell to what coast we should sail; whether to hell or heaven. It is reported of Socrates, when he was going out of the world, he had this speech, "I am now to die, and the gods know whether I shall be happy or miserable." That man who is ignorant of the state of his soul, must needs have the trembling at the heart, as Cain had a shaking in his flesh. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to what prince we belong, whether to the "Prince of peace," or the "prince of the air."

2. If we will not try ourselves, God will try us. He will examine us as the chief captain did Paul, "by scourging," Acts xxii. 24. He will ask that question as Christ, "Whose image and superscription is this?" And if we cannot shew him his own image, he will reject us.

3. There is secret corruption within, which will never be found out but by searching. There are in the heart (as Austin saith) hidden pollutions. When Pharaoh's steward accused Joseph's brethren of having the cup, they durst have sworn they had not the cup in their sack. Little doth a man know what atheism, pride and uncleanness is in his heart, till he searcheth.

4. The great advantage which will accrue to

us: the benefit is great, which way soever things turn. If upon examination we find that we have not grace in truth, then the mistake is discovered, and the danger prevented. If we find that we have grace, we may take the comfort of it. How glad was he that had "found the pearl of great price!" He that upon search finds that he had but the least degree of grace, is like one that hath found his box of evidences; he is heir to all the promises, and in a state of salvation.

And that we may go on the more successfully in this work, let us desire God to help us to find out our hearts, Job xxxiv. 32. "That which I see not teach thou me." Lord, take off the vail; shew me my heart; let me not perish through mistake, or go to hell with hope of heaven.

The sixth duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves is, the religious sanctifying of the Lord's day. That there should be a day of holy rest dedicated to God, appears from the institution, "Remember to keep holy the sabbath day." Our Christian sabbath comes in the room of the Jewish sabbath: it is called "the Lord's day," (Rev. i. 10.) from Christ the author of it. Our sabbath is altered by Christ's own appointment. He arose this day out of the grave, and appeared on it often to his disciples, (1 Cor. xvi. 1.) to intimate to them (saith Athanasius) that he transferred the sabbath to the Lord's day. And Saint Austin saith, that by Christ's rising on the first

day of the week, it was consecrated to be the Christian sabbath in remembrance of his resurrection. This day was anciently called *dies lucis*, the day of light; as Junius observes. The other days of the week would be dark, were it not for the shining of the "Sun of Righteousness" on this day. This day hath been called by the ancients, *regina dierum*, the queen of days. And St. Hierom prefers this day above all solemn festivals. The primitive church had this day in high veneration: it was a great badge of their religion: for when the question was asked, Keepest thou the sabbath? the answer was made, I am a Christian, and dare not omit the celebration of the Lord's day. What great cause have we thankfully to remember this day! As the benefit of Israel's deliverance from the Babylonish captivity was so great, that it drowned the remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, (Jer. xvi. 14.) so the benefit of our deliverance from Satan's captivity, and the rising of Christ from finishing the glorious work of our redemption was so famous, that in respect of it his other benefits receive as it were a diminution. Great was the work of creation; but greater the work of redemption. It cost more to redeem us, than make us. In the one there was only the speaking a word, (Ps. cxlviii. 5.) in the other the shedding of blood, Heb. ix. 22. The creation was the work of God's fingers, (Psal. viii. 3.) the redemption the work of his arm,

Luke i. 5. In the creation God gave us ourselves; in the redemption he gave us himself. So that the sabbath putting us in mind of our redemption, ought to be observed with the highest devotion. Herein we must offer holy violence to ourselves.

When this blessed day approacheth, we should labour, that as the day is sanctified, so our hearts may be sanctified.

We must on this day rest from all the works of our calling. As Abraham, when he went to sacrifice, left his servant and ass at the bottom of the hill, (Gen. xxii. 5.) so when we are to worship God this day, we must leave all secular business behind. And as Joseph, when he would speak with his brethren, thrust out the Egyptians, so when we would have converse with God this day, we must thrust out all earthly employments. Though works of necessity may be done, and works of charity, (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice) yet in other cases we must cease from all worldly negotiations. It is observable concerning Mary Magdalene, that she refused to anoint Christ's dead body on the sabbath-day, (Luke xxiii. 56.) she had before prepared her ointment, but came not to the sepulchre till the sabbath was past. She rested that day from civil work, though it were a commendable and glorious work; the anointing of Christ's dead body.

When this blessed day approacheth, we must

lift up our hearts in thankfulness to God, that he hath put another price into our hand for the gaining of heavenly wisdom. These are our spiritual harvest days ; now the wind of God's Spirit blows upon the sails of our affections, and we may be much furthered on in our heavenly voyage. Christian lift up thy heart to God in thankfulness, that he hath given thee another golden season, and be sure thou improve it ; it may be the last. Seasons of grace are not like the tide ; if a man misseth one tide, he may have another.

This day approaching, we must in the morning dress and fit our souls for the receiving of the word. The people of Israel must wash their garments before the law was delivered to them. Our hearts must be washed by prayer and repentance, the oracles of God being to be delivered to us.

And being met together, we must set ourselves as in the presence of God with seriousness and delight to hear God's sacred word. Take heed of distractions which fly-blow our duties.

We must labour to be bettered by every sabbath : where the Lord lays out cost, he looks for fruit. Fresh anointings of God are to be thirsted after ; and new cubits to be added to our spiritual stature. We must not be like the salamander, which lives in the fire, but is never the hotter. Christians should on these days aspire after communion with God, and endeavour to have the elapses of his Spirit, and clearer discoveries of his love

in Christ. In short, we should do on a sabbath as Moses : he ascended the mount that he might have a sight of God.

We must dedicate the whole day to God. Under the law a single sacrifice was appointed for other days of the week ; but two lambs were to be offered upon the sabbath. All this day must be spent with God ; he must have worship in public ; and when we come home, he must have family worship. Many leave all their religion at church (as I have seen some do their bibles) not hallowing God's name in their own houses, Mal. iii. 8. " Will a man rob God ? " When men pretend to worship God in the temple, but cut him short of family and closet-duties on a sabbath ; this is to rob God, and steal a part of his day from him.

Good reason we should consecrate the whole sabbath to God, and give him double devotion, for God doubles his blessings upon us this day. As the manna did rain twice as much on the sixth day, as any of the other days ; so the manna of spiritual blessings falls twice as much on the sabbath-day as any other.

We must rejoice in this day, as being a day wherein we enjoy much of God's presence, John viii. 56. " Abraham saw my day and rejoiced ; " so when we see a sabbath-day coming, we should rejoice. The protestants in France called their church paradise, because there they met with God.

The Jews called the sabbath, the desire of days, Isa. lviii. 13. "Thou shalt call the sabbath a delight." This we should look upon as the best day, as the queen of days, crowned with a blessing, Ps. cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." He hath made all the days, but hath sanctified this. We should look upon this day as a spiritual mart for our souls, wherein we have holy commerce and traffic with God. This day of rest is the beginning of an eternal rest. This day God sets open the "pool of Bethesda" in which those waters flow that refresh the broken in heart. And shall not we call this day a delight? The Jews on the sabbath laid aside their sackcloth and mourning.

This is in a right manner to sanctify a duty; and it is a duty wherein Christians must excite and offer violence to themselves.

Above all others, how well doth it become those into whose hands God hath put the power of magistracy, to shew forth holy violence in causing the Lord's day to be strictly observed? What a rare pattern hath Nehemiah set all good magistrates, Neh. xiii. 15. "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and all manner of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day, and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals." Verse 17. "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil

thing is this that ye do, and prophane the sabbath-day?" How dare ye infringe the command, and make a false entry upon God's freehold? My lord, your proclamation for the pious observation of the sabbath, and your punitive acts upon some offenders, have given a public testimony of your zeal for this day. The keeping up the honour of the sabbath, will much keep up your magisterial honour.*

The seventh duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves, is holy conference: and indeed we are backward enough to it, therefore had need herein provoke ourselves, Mal. iii. 17. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." A gracious person hath not only religion in his heart, but in his tongue, Ps. xxxvii. 30. "The law of God is in his heart, and his tongue talketh of judgment:" he drops holy words as pearls. It is the fault of Christians, that they do not in company provoke themselves to set good discourse on foot: and it is a sinful modesty: there is much visiting, but they do not give one another's souls a visit. In worldly things their tongue is "as the pen of a ready writer;" but in matters of religion, they are as if their tongue "did cleave to the roof of their mouth." As we must answer to God for idle words, so for sinful silence.

Oh let us offer violence to ourselves in this, in

* This book was dedicated to the then Lord Mayor of London.

setting on foot good discourse ! What should our words dilate and expatiate upon but heaven ? The world is a great inn ; we are guests in this inn. Travellers, when they are met in their inn, do not spend all their time in speaking about their inn ; they are to lodge there but a few hours, and they are gone ; but they are speaking of their home, and the country whither they are travelling. So when we meet together, we should not be talking only about the world ; we are to leave this presently ; but we should talk of our heavenly country, Heb. xi. 16.

That we may provoke ourselves to good discourse (for it will not be done without some kind of violence) let these considerations be duly weighed.

The discourse demonstrates what the heart is. As the glass shews what the face is, whether it be fair or foul ; so the words shew what the heart is. Vain speeches discover a light feathery heart ; gracious speeches are the birth of a gracious heart. The water of the conduit shews what the spring is.

Holy conference is very edifying, The apostle bids us “ edify one another,” Ephes. iv. 29. And how more than this way ? Good conference enlightens the mind when it is ignorant ; warms it when it is frozen ; settles it when it is wavering. A good life adorns religion ; good discourse propagates it.

Gracious discourse make us resemble Christ. His words were perfumed with holiness : “ grace

was poured into his lips," Ps. xlv. 2. He spake to the admiration of all: his hands wrought miracles, and his tongue spake oracles, Luke iv. 22. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Christ never came into any company, but he set good discourse on foot.

Levi made him a feast, (Luke v. 29.) and Christ feasted him with holy discourse. When he came to Jacob's well, he presently speaks of the "water of life," John iv. The more holy our speeches are, the more we are like Christ. Should not the members be like the head?

God takes special notice of every good word we speak when we meet, Mal. iii. 16. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him." Tamerlain, that Scythian captain, had always a book by him of the names and good deserts of his servants which he bountifully rewarded. As God hath a bottle for the tears of his people, so he hath a book in which he writes down all their good speeches, and will make honourable mention of them at the last day.

Holy discourse will be a means to bring Christ into our company. The two disciples were communing of the death and sufferings of Christ; and while they were speaking, Jesus Christ came among them, Luke xxiv. 15. "While they communed to-

gether, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them." When men entertain bad discourse, Satan draws near, and he makes one of the company, but when they have holy and gracious conference, Jesus Christ draws near, and wherever he comes he brings a blessing along with him. So much for the first, the offering violence to ourselves.

II. We must offer violence to Satan. Satan opposeth us both by open violence, and secret treachery. By open violence, so he is called the red dragon; by secret treachery, so he is called the old serpent. We read in Scripture of his snares and darts; he hurts more by his snares, than by his darts.

1. His violence. He labours to storm the castle of the heart: he stirs up to passion, lust, revenge. These are called "fiery darts," (Ephes. vi. 16.) because they oft set the soul on fire. Satan in regard of his fierceness is called a lion, 1 Pet. v. 8. "Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Not (saith Chrysostom) whom he may bite, but devour.

2. His treachery. What he cannot do by force, he will endeavour to do by fraud. Satan hath several subtle policies in tempting.

1. In suiting his temptations to the complexion and temper of the body. Satan studies the physiognomy, and lays suitable baits. He knew Achan's covetous humour, and tempted him with a wedge of gold. He tempts the sanguine man with beauty.

2. Another subtilty is to draw men to evil, under a pretence of good. The pirate doth mischief by hanging out false colours : so doth Satan by hanging out the colours of religion. He puts some men upon sinful actions, and persuades them much good will come of it. He tells them in some cases they may dispense with the rule of the word, and stretch their conscience beyond that line, that they may be in 'a capacity of doing more service ; as if God needed our sin to raise his glory.

3. Satan tempts to sin gradually. As the husbandman digs about the root of a tree, and by degrees loosens it, and at last it falls, so Satan steals, by degrees, into the heart : he is at first more modest. He did not say to Eve at first, eat the apple ; no, but he goes more subtilly to work ; he puts forth a question, " Hath God said ? " sure, Eve, thou art mistaken ; the bountiful God never intended to debar thee one of the best trees of the garden. " Hath God said ? " sure either God did not say it ; or if he did, he never really intended it. Thus by degrees he wrought her to distrust, and then she took of the^e fruit and eat. Oh take heed of Satan's first motions to sin, that seem more modest. He is first a fox, and then a lion.

4. Satan tempts to evil, in lawful things. It was lawful for Noah to eat the fruit of the grape ; but he took too much, and so sinned. Excess turns that which is good into evil. Eating and drinking may turn to intemperance. Industry in

one's calling (when excessive) is covetousness. Satan draws men to an immoderate love of the creature, and then makes them offend in that which they love; as Agrippina poisoned her husband Claudius in that meat he loved most.

5. Satan puts men upon doing good out of bad ends; if he cannot hurt them by scandalous actions, he will by virtuous actions.

Thus he tempts some to espouse religion out of policy to get preferment, and to give alms for applause, that others may see their good works, and canonize them. This hypocrisy doth leaven the duties of religion, and make them lose their reward.

6. The devil persuades to evil by such as are good. This sets a gloss upon his temptations, and makes them less suspected. The devil hath made use sometimes of the most eminent and holy men to promote his temptations. The devil tempted Christ by an apostle: Peter dissuades him from suffering. Abraham, a good man, bid his wife equivocate: "Say, Thou art my sister". These are his subtilties in tempting. Now here we must offer violence to Satan.

1. By faith, 1 Pet. v. 9. "Whom resist stedfast in faith." Faith is a wise intelligent grace; it can see a hook under the bait. It is an heroic grace; it is said above all, to quench the fiery darts of Satan. Faith resists the devil,

1st. As it doth keep the castle of the heart that it doth not yield. It is not the being tempted makes us guilty, but giving consent. Faith enters its protest against Satan.

2nd. Faith not only not yields, but beats back the temptation. Faith holds the promise in one hand, and Christ in the other: the promise encourageth faith, and Christ strengthens it: so faith beats the enemy out of the field.

2. We must offer violence to Satan by prayer. We overcome him upon our knees. As Sampson called to heaven for help, so a Christian by prayer fetcheth in auxiliary forces from heaven. In all temptations go to God by prayer. Lord teach me to use all the spiritual armour; how to hold the shield, how to wear the helmet, how to use the sword of the Spirit. Lord strengthen me in the battle; let me rather die a conqueror, than be taken prisoner, and led by Satan in triumph. Thus we must offer violence to Satan. There is a lion in the way; but we must resolve upon fighting.

And let this encourage us to offer violence to Satan. Our enemy is beaten in part already. Christ, who is the "Captain of our salvation," hath given Satan his death's wound upon the cross, Col. ii. 15. The serpent is soonest killed in his head. Christ hath bruised the head of the old serpent. The devil is a chained enemy, and a

conquered enemy ; therefore fear not to give battle to him. Resist him, and he will fly : he knows no march but running away.

III. We must offer violence to the world. The world shews its golden apple ; it is a part of our vow in baptism to fight under Christ's banner against the world. Take heed of being drowned in the luscious delights of it. It must be a strong brain that bears heady wine. He had need have a great deal of wisdom and grace that knows how to bear a great estate. Riches oft send up their intoxicating fumes, which make men's heads giddy with pride. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked," Deut. xxxii. 15. It is hard to climb up the hill of God with too many golden weights. Those that want the honours of the world, want the temptations of it. The world is a flattering enemy : it is given to some as Michal to David, for a snare. The world shews its two breasts of pleasure and profit, and many fall asleep with the breast in their mouth. The world doth never kiss us, but with an intent to betray us. It is a silken halter. The world is no friend to grace ; it chokes our love to heavenly things ; the earth puts out the fire. Naturally we love the world, Job xxxi. 24. "If I have made gold my hope ;" the Septuagint renders it, If I have been married to my gold. Too many are wedded to their money ; they live together as man and wife. Oh let us take heed of being entangled in this pleasing snare

Many who have escaped the rock of scandalous sins, yet have sunk in the world's golden quicksands. The sin is not in the using of the world, but in the loving, 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world." If we are Christians, we must offer violence to the world. Believers are called out of the world: they are in the world, but not of it, John xvii. 16. As we say of a dying man, he is not a man for this world. A true saint is crucified in his affections to the world, Gal. vi. 14. He is dead to the honours and pleasures of it. What delight doth a dead man take in pictures or music? Jesus Christ gave himself "to redeem us from this present evil world," Gal. i. 4. If we will be saved, we must offer violence to the world. Living fish swim against the stream. We must swim against the world, else we shall be carried down the stream, and fall into the dead sea. That we may offer violence to the world, let us remember,

1. It is deceitful; our Saviour calls it "the deceitfulness of riches," Matt. xiii. 22. The world promiseth happiness, but nothing less. It promiseth us Rachel, but puts us off with blear-eyed Leah: it promiseth to satisfy our desires, but it increaseth them: it gives poisoned pills, but wraps them in sugar.

2. It is defiling, Jam. i. 17. "Pure religion is to keep himself unspotted from the world." As if the apostle would intimate, that the world is good for

nothing but to spot: it spots first men's consciences, and then their names. It is called "filthy lucre," (1 Pet. v. 2.) because it makes men so filthy. They will damn themselves to get the world. Ahab would have Naboth's vineyard, though he swam to it in blood.

3. It is perishing, 1 John ii. 17. "The fashion of the world passeth away." The world is like a flower which withers while we are smelling to it.

IV. We must offer violence to heaven. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. Though heaven is given us freely, yet we must take pains for it. Canaan was given Israel freely, but they must fight with the Canaanites. It is not a lazy wish, or a sleepy prayer will bring us to heaven: we must offer violence. Therefore in Scripture our earnestness for heaven is set out by those allegories and metaphors which imply violence.

1. Sometimes by striving, Luke xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The Greek word signifies, strive as in an agony.

2. Wrestling, which is a violent exercise, Ephes. vi. 12. We are to wrestle with a body of sin, and with the powers of hell.

3. Running in a race, 1 Cor. ix. 24. "So run that ye may obtain." We have a long race from earth to heaven, and but a little time to run; it will soon be sun-set. Therefore so run. In a race theres not only laying aside all weights to hinder, but a putting forth all the strength of the

body; a straining every joint, that men may press on with all swiftness to lay hold on the prize. Thus St. Paul pressed "towards the mark," Phil. iii. 14. Alas! where is this holy violence to be found?

1st. Many have made themselves unfit to run this blessed race; they are drunk with the pleasures of the world. A drunken man is unfit to run a race.

2nd. Others neglect to run this race all their life; and when sickness and death approach, now they will begin. A sick man is very unfit to walk, much less to run a race. I acknowledge true repentance is never too late; but when a man can hardly stir his hand, or lift up his eyes, now is a very unfit time to begin the race from earth to heaven.

4. This earnestness for heaven is compared to fighting, which implies violence, 1 Tim. vi. 12. "Fight the good fight of faith." It is not enough to be labourers, but warriors. Indeed in heaven, our armour shall be hung up in token of victory; but now it is a day of battle; and we must "fight the good fight of faith." As Hannibal forced a way for his army over the Alps and craggy rocks, so must we force our way to heaven. We must not only pray, but pray fervently, Jam. v. 16. This is offering violence to heaven.

The reasons why there must be this offering violence to heaven, are,

1. God's indispensable command. He hath enacted a law, that whosoever eats of the fruit of Paradise, shall eat it in the sweat of his brows, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." The Greek word imports an anxious solicitous care about salvation.

2. God's decree. The Lord hath in his eternal decree joined the end and the means together; striving and entering; the race and the crown. And a man can no more think to come to heaven without offering violence, than he can think to come to the end of his journey, that never sets a step in the way. Who expects an harvest without plowing and sowing? How can we expect the harvest of glory without labour? Though our salvation in respect of Christ is a purchase, yet in respect of us, it is a conquest.

3. We must offer violence to heaven in regard of the difficulty of the work; taking a kingdom. First we must be pulled out of another kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. To get out of the state of nature is hard, and when that is done, and we are cut off from the wild olive, and implanted into Christ, there is new work still to do; new sins to mortify; new temptations to resist; new graces to quicken. A Christian must not only get faith, but go "from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17. This will not be done without violence.

4. We must offer violence to heaven, in regard of the violent assaults made against us.

1st. Our own hearts oppose us. It is a strange paradox : man who doth naturally desire happiness, yet opposeth it : he desires to be saved, yet hates that holy violence which should save him.

2nd. All the powers of hell oppose us. Satan stands at our right hand, as he did at Joshua's, Zech. iii. 2. Shall not we be as earnest to save our souls, as the dragon is to devour them : Without violent affections, we shall never resist violent temptations.

5. We must be violent, because it is a matter of the highest importance. A man doth not beat his head about trifles, but matters wherein his life and estate are concerned. Violence is to be offered, if we consider,

1st. What we shall save : the precious soul. What pains do we take for the feeding and enriching the body, the brutish part ! O then what violence should we use for the saving the soul ! The body is but a ring of clay, the soul is the diamond. The soul is the glass wherein the image of God is seen. There are in the soul some shadows and faint representations of a Deity. If Christ thought the soul worth shedding his blood, well may we think it worth spending our sweat.

2nd. Consider what we shall gain : a kingdom. What violence is used for earthly crowns and empires : men will wade to the crown through blood. Heaven is a kingdom which should make us strive for it, not to sweat only, but to blood

The hopes of a kingdom (saith St. Basil) should carry a Christian cheerfully through all labours and sufferings.

There must be offering violence in regard of that aptness and proneness in the best to grow remiss in religion. When they have been quickened in a duty, they are apt to grow dead again. When they have been heated at the fire of an ordinance, they are apt to freeze again, therefore they must still be offering violence. The heart, like the watch, will be apt to go down; therefore must be ever and anon wound up by prayer and meditation. The fire of devotion will soon go out, if it be not blown up. A Christian's own experience of his inconstancy in good, is cogent enough to holy violence.

1. If there must be this offering violence, it shews us it is not so easy a thing as men imagine to get to heaven. There are so many precepts to obey; so many promises to believe; so many rocks to avoid, that it is a difficult matter to be saved. Some fancy a fine easy way to heaven, an idle wish, a death-bed tear; but the text tells us of offering violence. Alas! there is a great work to be done; the bias of the heart is to be changed. Man by nature doth not only want grace, but hates it. He hath an envenomed spirit against goodness, and is angry with converting grace; and is it easy to have the heart metamorphosed? for the proud heart to be made humble; for the

earthly heart to be made heavenly ; can this be done without using violence ? It is all up hill to heaven, and it will make us sweat before we get to the top of the hill. Indeed hell will be taken without storm : the gates of hell, like that iron gate, (Acts xii. 10.) “ open of their own accord : ” but if we get to heaven, we must force our way ; we must besiege it with sighs and tears, and get the scaling ladder of faith to storm it. We must not only work but fight. Like those Jews, who girt the wall of Jerusalem, Nehem. iv. 17. “ Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.”

A Christian is commanded upon hot service ; he must charge through the whole army of his lusts, every one of which is stronger than Goliath. A Christian hath no time to lie fallow ? he must be either praying, or watching ; either upon the mount, or in the valley ; on the mount of faith, or in the valley of humility. Worldly things are not obtained without labour : What toiling in the shop ? What sweating in the furnace ? And do we think heaven will be had without labour ? Do men dig for worms, and not for gold ? Those who are in heaven are employed ; much more should they who are getting thither. The angels are “ ministering spirits,” Heb. i. 14. The wings of the seraphims are hieroglyphical, and shew us how swift they are in God’s service. If the angels in heaven are busying themselves in noble and ho-

nourable employment, how industrious should we be who are getting up the hill of God, and have not yet arrived at a state of glory? Is salvation-work so easy? Can a man be saved by a leap? Can he leap out of the devil's arms into Abraham's bosom? O no! there must be offering violence. Some think free grace will save them; but it must be in the use of means. "Watch and pray." Others say, the promises will bring them to heaven; but the promises of the word are not to be separated from the precepts. The promise tells us of a crown; but the precept saith, "so run," 1 Cor. ix. 24. The promises are made to encourage faith, not to cherish sloth. But say others, Christ hath died for sinners; and so they leave him to do all for them, and they will do nothing. Then the text is out of date, and all the exhortations to striving, and fighting the good fight of faith, are in vain. Our salvation cost Christ blood; it will cost us sweat. The boat may as well get to shore without rowing, as we can to heaven without offering violence.

2. It shews us the great mistake of ignorant people, who think the bare doing of duties, though in never so slight superficial a manner, is enough. The text tells us of offering violence.

1st. In the business of prayer: they think it is enough to mutter over a few words, though the heart be asleep all the while: what offering of violence is here? Christ was in an agony at

prayer, Luke xxii. 44. Many when they pray are rather in a lethargy than an agony. Jacob wrestled with the angel in prayer, Gen. xxxii. 24. The incense was to be laid upon burning coals, Levit. xvi. 22. Incense was a type of prayer, and the incense upon coals was a type of fervency in prayer. Few know what the spirit of prayer means; or what it is to have the affections boil over. When they are about the world they are all fire; when they are at prayer they are all ice.

2nd. In hearing of the word. Many people think it is enough to bring their bodies to the assembly, but they never look to their hearts. They satisfy themselves that they have been at church, though they have not been with God there. Others go to a sermon as to the exchange, to hear news; new notions that please their fancy, but do not attend to the word as about a matter of life and death. They do not go to meet with Christ in an ordinance; to have the breathings of his Spirit, and the infusions of his love. Alas! what little violence for heaven is to be seen in most people's worship! In all the sacrifices of the law there was fire. How can those duties be accepted, that have no fire in them; no offering of violence?

3. If there must be this offering of violence to heaven, then it shews us how dangerous moderation in religion is. Violence and moderation are two different things. Indeed moderation in the

things of the world is commendable. We should moderate our desires here; and use the world as if we used it not. We may, as Jonathan, dip the end of the rod in honey, but not thrust it in too far: in this sense moderation is good: but moderation in matters of practical piety is sinful: it is contrary to offering violence. Moderation in the world's sense is for one not to be too zealous, not to be too fierce for heaven. Moderation is not to venture further in religion than may stand with self-preservation. As the king of Navarre told Beza, he would launch no further into the sea, than he might be sure to return safe to land. To keep on the warm side of the hedge, is a main article in the politician's creed. Moderation in the world's sense is neutrality. The moderate person hath found out a medium between strictness and profaneness; he is not for debauchery, nor yet for purity.

It was the advice Calvin gave Melancthon, that he should not so affect the name of moderate, that at last he lost all his zeal. To be lukewarm in matters of religion, is far from offering violence to heaven, Rev. iii. 19. "Be zealous and repent." If any should ask us why we are so violent, till them, it is for a kingdom. If they shall ask us why we make such haste in the ways of religion, tell them, we are running an heavenly race, and a softly moderate pace will never win the prize. Moderation hath made many loose heaven; they

have not made haste enough ; they have come too late (like the foolish virgins) when the door hath been shut.

Out of this text I may draw forth several arrows of reproof.

First. It reproves slothful Christians, who are “settled on their lees :” they make a lazy profession of religion, but use no violence. They are like the “lilies” which “toil not, neither do they spin.” The snail, by reason of its slow motion, was reckoned among the unclean, Levit. xi. 30. St. Austin calls idleness the burial of a man alive. There are some faint wishes ; Oh, that I had heaven ! But a man may desire venison ; and want it, if he doth not hunt for it, Prov. xiii. 4. “The soul of the sluggard wisheth and hath nothing.” Men could be content to have the kingdom of heaven ; but they are loth to fight for it. They choose rather to go in a feather bed to hell, than to be carried to heaven in a fiery chariot of zeal and violence. How many sleep away, and play away their time, as if they were made like the Leviathan, to play in the sea, Ps. civ. 26. It is a speech of Seneca, “No man is made wise by chance.” Sure it is, no man is saved by chance, but he must know how he came by it, namely, by offering violence. Such as have accustomed themselves to an idle lazy temper, will find it hard to shake off, Cant. v. 3. “I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on ?” The spouse had laid

nerself upon the bed of sloth, and though Christ knocked at the door, she was loth to rise and let him in. Some pretend to be believers, but are idle in the vineyard. They pretend to make use of faith for seeing, but not for working: this faith is fancy. Oh! that Christians had a spirit of activity in them, 1 Chron. xxii. 16. "Arise and be doing, and the, Lord be with thee." We may sometimes learn of our enemy. The devil is never idle; he "walketh about," 1 Pet. v. 8. The world is his diocese, and he is every day going his visitation. Is Satan active? Is the enemy upon his march coming against us? And are we asleep upon our guard? As Satan himself is not idle, so he will not endure that any of his servants should be idle. When the devil had entered into Judas, how active was Judas! he goes to the high priest, from thence to the band of soldiers, and with them back to the garden, and never left till he had betrayed Christ. Satan will not endure an idle servant; and do we think God will? How will heathens rise up in judgment against slothful Christians! What pains did they take in the olympic games; they ran but for a garland of flowers, and do we stand still who run for a crown of immortality? Certainly, if only the violent take heaven, the idle person will never come there. God puts no difference between these two, slothful and wicked, Matt. xxv. 26. "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

Secondly, It reproves the formalist, who puts all his religion in gestures, and vestures, emblems of devotion, and thinks this will entitle him to heaven, Rev. iii. 1. "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." The form and outside of Christianity is judged necessary.

1. It is a means to keep up men's credit in the world. Should they be visibly profane, such as are sober would not come near them; they would be looked upon no better than baptized heathens; therefore they must make a shew of devotion, out of policy, to gain some repute and esteem among others.

2. A form serves to stop the mouth of conscience: had not they some kind of outward devotion, their conscience would fly in their face, and they would be a terror to themselves; therefore they think it expedient to have a form of godliness. But alas! what is all this? The text speaks of offering violence to heaven. What violence is there in a form? Here is no taking pains with the heart; a "form" but no "power," 2 Tim. iii. 5. Formalists are like the tombs in the church, which have their eyes and hands lift up to heaven, but no soul. The formalist's devotion runs out most in punctilios, and niceties: he neglects "weightier matters of the law, faith and mercy," Matt. xxiii. 23. He scruples superstitious fancies, but makes no reckoning of sin: he is more afraid of an hare crossing his way, than of an harlot

in his bed. He hates sanctity. Christ had no such bitter enemies as the formal Pharisees. The formalist is never violent, but in persecuting the power of godliness.

Thirdly, It reproves such as are violent in a bad sense: they are violent for hell; they go thither in the sweat of their brows, Jer. viii. 6. "Every one turned to his course; as the horse rusheth into battle." A war-horse rusheth violently among the guns and pikes: so did they rush into sin violently. Men are violent, 1. In opposing good. 2. In pursuing evil.

1. In opposing good. Several ways.

1. They offer violence to the Spirit of God. The Spirit knocks at the door of sinners' hearts; he waits till his head be filled "with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night;" but sinners repulse and grieve the Spirit, and send away this dove from the ark of their souls, Acts vii. 51. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The Spirit offers grace to the sinner, and the sinner offers violence to the Spirit, Isa. lxiii. 10. "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit;" and may not the Lord give over striving? God, who is willing to come in when we open to him, hath not promised to come again if we unkindly repulse him.

2. They offer violence to conscience. Conscience is God's preacher in the bosom; and this preacher cannot flatter: it tells men of their pride, covetousness, abuse of mercy; but they, instead of

being violent against their sins, offer violence to conscience: they silence and imprison conscience. But as the prophet Zachary, when he was dumb called for a table book, and did write, (Luke i. 63.) so when conscience cannot be permitted to speak, it will write: it writes down men's sins; and when at death they shall be forced to read the hand writing, it will make their hearts tremble, and their knees smite. This I fear is too common, for men to offer violence to their conscience; and what will be the issue? They who will not hear the voice of conscience, shall be sure to feel the worm of conscience.

3. They offer violence to God's image. The saints (who are God's lively picture) are opposed and shot at. This is a cursed violence, Gal. iv. 29. "As he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him who was born after the Spirit; so it is now." Christ himself is stricken at through believers. The church hath been always in the torrid zone; the ploughers have ploughed upon her back. The earth has been sown with the bodies of the saints, and watered with their blood. Persecutors I grant are of an ancient family. The first man that was born in the world was a persecutor, namely, Cain; and he hath had a numerous offspring: Nero, Trajan, Domitian, Dioclesian, Maximinus. Chrysostom saith, that the apples of his eyes fell out. Felix, earl of Wertemberg, being at supper at Augsburg, did take

an oath, that before he died, he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans; but was afterwards choked in his own blood. Persecutors are the curse of the creation, being some of those thorns and briers which the earth brings forth.

4. Men are violent in pursuing evil.

1. They are violent in their opinions, 2 Pet. ii. 1. "Privily they shall bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." Arius was such an one; and afterwards his bowels gushed out. And truly the spirit of Arius is yet alive at this day, while men dare deny the deity of the blessed Son of God. Many of the heretics of old were so violent, that their opinion was to them a bible; and some of them died in maintaining their heresies. These were the devil's martyrs.

2. These are violent in their passions. Anger is a short frenzy, James iii. 6. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." In this little member there is a great world, viz. a world of sin: such as would be counted sober, yet are drunk with passion. Their prayers are cold, but their anger hot. They spit fire as the serpent doth poison. Fiery passions without repentance, bring men to the fiery furnace.

3. They are violent for their lusts, Tit. iii. 3. "Serving divers lusts." Lust is an inordinate desire or impulse, provoking the soul to the grati-

fyng its carnal desires. Aristotle calls them brutish lusts, because when lusts are violent, they will not let reason or conscience be heard ; but a man is carried brutishly to the satisfying of the flesh.

1st. Men are violent for their drunken lusts. Though death be in the cup, they will drink it off. One having almost lost his eye-sight, the physician told him there was no cure for him, unless he would leave off his excessive drinking ; then saith he, Farewel sweet light : he would rather lose his eye-sight, than leave his drinking.

2nd. They are violent for their unclean lusts. Men are said to “burn in lusts,” Rom. i. 27. The apostle intimateth that lust is a kind of fever. Feverish heats are not more pernicious to the body, than lust is to the soul. Oh, what folly is it for a drop of pleasure, to drink a sea of wrath !

3rd. They are violent for their oppressive lusts, who wrong and defraud others, and by violence take away their right. Instead of clothing the naked, they make them who are clothed naked. These birds of prey live upon rapine. They are cruel, as if with Romulus they had been suckled with the milk of wolves. They smile at the curses of the poor, and grow fat with their tears. They have forgotten Christ’s caveat, Luke iii. 14. “Do violence to no man.” Ahab violently took away Naboth’s vineyard, 2 Kings xxi. 11. Hell is

taken by this violence, Prov. iv. 17. "Who drink the wine of violence." This wine will turn to poison at last, Psal. xi. 5. "Him that loveth violence, God's soul hates."

4th. They are violent for their covetous lusts. Covetousness is the soul's dropsy, Amos vii. 2. "Who pant after the dust of the earth." They compass sea and land to make money their proselyte. Their god is made of gold, and to it they bow down. Those who bowed down on their knees to drink of the waters, were accounted unfit soldiers for Gideon, Judg. vii. 6. So are those unfit for Christ, that stoop immoderately to the love of earthly things. They who are violent for the world, what have they but the wind? Eccles. v. 16. "What profit hath he who hath laboured for the wind?" The world cannot enrich the soul, it cannot remove pain. If pangs of conscience come, the world can no more give comfort, than a crown of gold can cure the head-ach.

Fourthly, It reproves them who have in part left off that holy strictness and violence in religion as once they had. Their fervour is cooled and abated. What they do is so little, that it cannot be called violence. They serve God, but are not "fervent in spirit." They do not leave off duty, but they grow dead in duty. They have "left their first love," Rev. ii. 4. It is with them as

fire when it is going out; or as the sun when it is going down. Like aguish men, before they were in a paroxism, or hot fit of zeal; but now the cold fit hath taken them; they are formal and frozen in religion. Time was when they “called the sabbath a delight,” Isa. lviii. 13. How were their hearts raised in duty! How diligently did they seek him “whom their soul loved!” but now the case is altered; their religion doth languish, and even vanish. Time was when they were in an agony, and did send forth strong cries in prayer. Now the chariot wheels are pulled off, and the spirit of prayer is much abated. Their prayers do even freeze between their lips; a clear sign of the decay of grace. These persons are grown both lethargical and consumptive.

1. Lethargical, Cant. v. 2. “I sleep, but my heart wakes.” Though grace was alive in her, her heart waked; yet she was in a dull drowsy temper, “I sleep.” When the heart burns in sin, and cools in duty, it is a sure sign of growing to a stupid lethargy

2. Consumptive. There are two signs of persons in a spiritual consumption

1st. When their desire after Christ and heaven is not so strong as it was. A consumptive man’s stomach decays. Christians have not such violent affections to heavenly things; they can desire corn and wine, and the luscious delights of the

earth; but, Christ is less precious; they are not in pangs of desire after him, a sad symptom their grace is in a consumption.

2nd. When they are not so vigorous in motion. A man that is lively and stirring at his work, it is a sign he is in health; but when he is listless, and cares not to stir, or put his hand to any thing; a sign nature is declining. So when men have no heart to that which is good, they care not to put themselves upon the exercises of religion; they have lost a spirit of activity for God; they serve him in a faint sickly manner; it is a sign they are consumptive.

When the pulse can scarce be felt, it beats so low, men are near dying. So when those who were once violent for heaven, but now we can scarce perceive any good in them, the pulse beats low, grace is "ready to die," Rev. iii. 2. To you who have abated in your holy violence, and are grown remiss in duty, let me expostulate with you, as the Lord did by the prophet, Jer. ii. 5. "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" What evil have you found in God, that you leave off your former strictness? Hath not God fed you with manna from above, and given you his Holy Spirit to be your guide and comforter? Hath he not made you swim in a sea of mercy? What evil have you found in prayer, that you are less violent in it? Have not you had sweet intercourse with God? Have not you sometimes

been melted and enlarged, insomuch that you have thought yourselves in the suburbs of heaven when you have been upon this mount? Hath not the dove of prayer brought an olive-branch of peace in its mouth? What evil have you found in the word? Time was when you did take this book and eat it, and it was "honey in your mouth:" hath the word less virtue in it now? Are the promises like Aaron's dry rod, withered and sapless? What iniquity have you found in the ways of God, that you have abated your former violence in religion? Oh "remember whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works," Rev. ii. 5. Consider seriously,

1. The less violence for heaven, the less peace. Our consciences are never at peace in a drowsy state. It is the lively acting of grace makes the heart calm and serene. These two go together, walking "in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost," Acts ix. 31. Christian, if once thou growest remiss in religion, conscience will chide. If thou belongest to God, he will never let thee be quiet, but will send some affliction or other to awaken thee out of thy security, and make thee recover that active lively frame of heart as once thou hadst.

2. You that grow more dead in God's service, and leave your first love, give great advantage to Satan. The less violent you are, the more violent he is; the less you pray, the more he tempts; and

what a case are you now in? How can grace that is weak and sickly withstand violent temptations? Hence it is God suffers his own people sometimes to fall into sin, as a just punishment of their luke-warmness, and to make them more zealous and violent for the future.

3. Your remissness in religion, though it may not damn you, it will damage you. You will lose that degree of glory, which else you might have had. Though your remissness may not lose your crown, it will lessen it, and make it weigh lighter.

4. The more lazy a Christian's desires are, the more lively his corruptions. The weaker the body grows, the stronger the disease grows. Oh! therefore pray for quickening grace, Ps. cxliii. 11. Beg fresh gales of the Spirit to blow upon you. Never leave till you have recovered that holy violence which once you had.

It reproves those who have quite left off all violence: they have left off reading and praying in their family. There is not so much as a face of religion to be seen; they are fallen finally. Such were Joash, Jehu, Julian. The goodly building of their profession, which others admired, now hath not one stone left upon another.

But why do men thus run retrograde in their motion, and quite throw off that violence which they seemed once to have?

1. Because they never had a principle of spiritual life. Things that move from a principle of

life are constant, as the motion of the pulse : but things artificial are apt to be at a stand, and their motion ceaseth. As a clock when the weights are hung on goes, but take off the weights and it stands ; so the apostate never moved in religion but for gain and applause ; and when these weights are taken of, he is at a stand : he goes no farther. That branch must needs wither that hath no root to grow upon.

2. Men throw off all violence, and degenerate into apostacy, because they never did duties of religion with delight. St. Paul delighted in the law of God in the inward man, Rom. viii. 22. It was his heaven to serve God. A man that delights in pleasure will never give over : but the apostate never had any true delight in the ways of God : he was rather forced with fear, than drawn with love : he served a master that he never cared for ; no wonder then he leaves his service.

3. Men degenerate into apostacy through unbelief, Ps. lxxviii. 22. "They believed not in God." Ver. 41. "They turned back and tempted God." Sinners have jealous thoughts of God ; they distrust his love, therefore desert his service ; they think they may pray, and hear, and to no purpose, Mal. iii. 14. "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances ?" We may draw near to God in duty, but he will never draw near to us in mercy. Thus unbelief and atheism prevailing, the livery

of religion is presently thrown off, and all former violence for heaven ceaseth. Infidelity is the mother of apostacy.

4. Men leave off their former violence, and prove Judases and devils, because they love something else more than religion. There is some lust or other their heart is engaged to, and their violence for sin hath destroyed their violence for religion. Solymon the great Turk, seeing many Christians go over to Turcism, he asked them what moved them to turn Turks. They replied, they did it to be eased of their taxes. They were drawn from God through the prevalency of covetousness. If there be any lust in the heart predominant, it will get head, and destroy all former zeal for religion. Abimelech, a bastard, destroyed "threescore and ten of his brethren upon one stone," Judges ix. 50. If there be any lust the heart runs after, this bastard-sin will destroy threescore and ten duties; it will murder all that violence for heaven which a man did once seem to have.

5. Men leave off former violence out of pusillanimity: if they are violent in religion, they fear they may lose their profits and preferments, nay their lives. The coward never yet won the field. When carnal fears grow violent, all violence for heaven is at an end. He begins to be evil, who fears to be good. Many of the Jews who were great followers of Christ, when they saw the

swords and staves. left him. Prov. xxix. 25. "In the fear of man there is a snare." Carnal fear makes sin appear less than it is, but danger greater.

6. Men leave off violence for heaven for want of patience. Sensible feeling of joy is withheld, and they have not patience to stay for the full recompence of reward. Hypocrites are all for present pay; and if they have not that suddenly which they desire, they bid adieu to religion, and say as that wicked king, 2 Kings vi. 33. "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" They consider not that God is a free agent, and will dispense his blessings in the fittest season, but they go to tie God up to their time. They forget that joy is a part of the reward, and they would have the reward, and their work not yet finished. Doth the servant use to receive his pay before his work is done? James v. 7. "The husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth:" he doth not look to sow and reap in a day. But hypocrites are always in haste; they would reap joy, before they have done sowing the seed of repentance; and because comfort is a while deferred, they are offended; they will serve God no longer: their patience is at an end, therefore their violence is at an end.

7. Men leave off holy violence, and degenerate into profaneness, out of a just judgment of God, leaving them to themselves: they oft resisted the

Spirit, and sent it away sad from them, and now as a just judgment, God saith, "My Spirit shall no longer strive;" and if this wind doth not blow upon their sails, they cannot move. If this sun withdraw from their climate, they must needs freeze in impenitency. They before sinned against clear convictions; they silenced conscience, and God hath seared it. And now, if an angel should preach to them from heaven, it would do them no good. O how dismal is this! the thoughts of it may strike us into an holy consternation. Thus we see why men apostatize and leave off their violence for heaven.

Well, but what do they get by this? let us see what a purchase apostates make.

They proclaim their folly; for all their former violence for heaven is lost. He who runs half the race, and then faints, loseth the garland, Ezek. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned." All men's prayers and tears are lost. The apostate unravels all that he hath been doing. He is like a man that with a pencil draws a curious picture, and then comes with his sponge and wipes it out again, Gal. iii. 4. "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" Perhaps for religion a man hath suffered many a reproach and affront; and have ye suffered all this in vain? Here is folly indeed.

It will be bitterness in the end. Jer. ii. 19. "Know therefore that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord." Men, by leaving off their violence for heaven, get a thorn in their conscience, a blot in their name, a curse in their souls. What got Judas by his apostacy but an halter? so that it will be bitterness in the end. The apostate, when he dies, drops as a wind-fall into the devil's mouth.

Fifthly, It reproves those who put off this violence for the kingdom till old age. When they are fit for no other work, then they will begin this. No man saith, I will learn my trade when I am old. It is imprudence for one to begin a work for heaven, when he is past his labour. There is a night of sickness and death coming; and our Saviour saith, "The night cometh when none can work," John ix. 4. Sure a man can put forth but little violence for heaven, when old age and old sins are upon him. Besides, how unworthy and disingenuous is it, to give the devil the flower of youth, and God the dregs of old age! Therefore God rejected Cain's sacrifice because it was stale before he brought it, Gen. iv. 3. There is little hope of their salvation, who are never violent for heaven, till their disease grows violent.

Sixthly, It reproves those that are so far from using this violence for heaven, that they deride it. These are your zealous ones, 2 Pet. iii. 3.

“In the last days there shall be scoffers.” Holy walking is become the object of derision, Psa. lxi. 12. “I am become the song of the drunkards.” This shews a vile heart. There are some who, though they have no goodness themselves, yet honour them that are good. Herod revered John Baptist. But what devils are they who scoff at goodness, and reproach others for doing that which God commands ! This age produceth such as sit in the chair of scorers, and throw their squibs at religion. In Bohemia, when some of the martyrs were the next day to suffer, they comforted themselves with this, that this was their last supper, and to-morrow they should feast with Christ in heaven ; a papist standing by, asked them in a jeer, if Christ had any cooks in heaven to dress their supper ? Oh take heed of such an Ishmael-spirit ! It is a sign of a man given over to the devil. God “scorneth the scorner,” Prov. iii. 34. And sure he shall never live with God, whose company God scorns.

Seventhly, It reproves them who, instead of taking heaven by force, keep it off by force ; as if they were afraid of being happy ; or as if a crown of glory would hurt them. Such are,

1. The ignorant, who shut their eyes against the light, and refuse to be taught the way to heaven, Hosea iv. 6. “Thou hast rejected knowledge.” The Hebrew word signifies, to reject with disdain. As I have read of a Scotch bishop,

who thanked God he never knew what the Old and New Testament was. I wonder where that bishop took his text.

2. The profane, who hate to be admonished, and had rather die than reform, Amos v. 10. "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate." These keep off heaven by force. Such were those Acts xiii. 46. "Seeing you put away the word from you." The Greek word may be rendered, seeing you push it away with your shoulders. As if a sick man should bolt out the physician, lest he should cure him, Job xxi. 14. "Who say unto the Almighty, depart from us." God is loath to be gone; he wooes and beseecheth sinners to accept of terms of mercy; he is loath to be gone, but sinners will have him gone: they say to him, Depart! May not we say to these, "Who hath bewitched you?" what madness beyond hyperbole is this, that you should not only forsake mercy, but fight against it: as if there were danger in going to heaven? These who put away salvation from them, are *felo de se*; they do wilfully perish; they would not hear of any thing that should save them. Were it not a sad epitaph to be written upon a man's tomb-stone, Here lies one that murdered himself? This is the condition of desperate sinners, they keep off heaven by force; they are self-murderers. Therefore God writes their epitaph upon their grave, Hosea xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

3. Let us then examine whether we put forth this holy violence for heaven? What is an empty profession without this? Like a lamp without oil. Let us all ask ourselves, what violence do we use for heaven?

1. Do we strive with our hearts, to get them into an holy frame? How did David awaken all the powers of his soul to God? Ps. lvii. 8. "I myself will awake early." The heart is like a bell that is a long while a raising.

2. Do we set time apart to call ourselves to account, and try our evidences for heaven? Ps. lxxvii. 6. "My spirit made diligent search." Do we take our hearts, as a watch, all in pieces, to see what is amiss, and mend it? Are we curiously inquisitive into the state of our souls? Are we afraid of painted grace, as of painted happiness?

3. Do we use violence in prayer? Is there fire in our sacrifice? Doth the wind of the Spirit, filling our sails, cause "groans unutterable?" Rom. viii. 26. Do we pray in the morning as if we were to die at night?

4. Do we thirst for the living God? Are our souls big with holy desires? Ps. lxxiii. 25. "There is none upon earth my soul desires besides thee." Do we desire holiness as well as heaven? Do we desire as much to look like Christ, as to live with Christ? Is our desire constant? Is this spiritual pulse ever beating?

5. Are we skilled in self-denial? Can we deny

our ease, our aims, our interest? Can we cross our own will to fulfil God's? Can we behead our beloved sin? To pluck out the right eye requires violence.

6. Are we lovers of God? It is not how much we do, but how much we love. Doth love command the castle of our hearts? Doth Christ's beauty and sweetness "constrain us?" 2 Cor. v. 14. Do we love God more than we fear hell?

7. Do we keep our spiritual watch? Do we set spies in every place, watching our thoughts, our eyes, our tongues? When we have prayed against sin, do we watch against temptation? The Jews having sealed the stone of Christ's sepulchre, "set a watch," Matt. xxvii. 66. After we have been at the word, or sacrament (that sealing ordinance) do we set a watch?

8. Do we press after further degrees of sanctity? Phil. iii. 13. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before." A good Christian is a wonder; he is the most contented, yet the least satisfied; he is contented with a little of the world, but not satisfied with a little grace; he would still have more faith, and be anointed with fresh oil. Paul desired to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead," (Phil. iii. 11.) that is, he endeavoured (if possible) to arrive at such a measure of grace as the saints shall have at the resurrection.

9. Is there an holy emulation in us? Do we labour to out-shine others in religion; to be more

eminent for love and good works? Do we something which is singular? Matt. v. 47. "What do you more than others?"

10. Are we got above the world? though we walk on earth, do we trade in heaven? Can we say as David, Psal. cxxxix. 17. "I am still with thee." This requires violence; for motions upward are usually violent.

11. Do we set ourselves always under God's eye? Psal. xvi. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me." Do we live soberly and godly, remembering whatever we are doing? Our Judge looks on.

If it be thus with us, we are happy persons. This is the holy violence the text speaks of, and is the right way of taking the kingdom of God. And surely never did Noah so willingly put forth his hand to receive the dove into the ark, as Jesus Christ will put forth his hand to receive us into heaven.

IV. It exhorts all Christians to this holy violence for heaven. But before I press the exhortation, let me remove some objections that may be made against this blessed violence,

1. But we have no power of ourselves to save ourselves. You bid us be violent, as if you should bid a man tied fast in fetters, to walk.

It is true, we cannot till grace come, effectually operate to our own salvation. Before conversion

we are purely passive; and when God bids us convert and turn, this is to shew us what we ought to do, not what we can do. Yet let us do what we are able.

1st. We have power to avoid those rocks, which will certainly ruin our souls; I mean gross sins. A man needs not be in bad company; he needs not swear, or tell a lie: nor would he do it if it were by law death to swear an oath.

2nd. We have power to put ourselves upon the use of means, praying, reading, holy conference; this will condemn men at the last day; they do not act so vigorously in their sphere as they might; they do not use the means, and try whether God will give grace. God will come with that silencing question at last, "Why didst not thou put my money to the exchangers?" Matt. xxv. 17. Why didst not thou improve that power I gave thee?

3rd. Though we have not power to save ourselves, yet we must pursue after salvation, because God hath made a promise of grace, as well as to grace. He hath promised to "circumcise our hearts:" to put "his Spirit within us;" to enable us to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. So that by prayer we are to put the bond in suit, and to press God with his own promise. Though I will not say with the Arminians, Upon our endeavour God is bound to give grace; yet he is not

wanting to them that seek his grace: nay, he denies his grace to none but them that wilfully refuse it, Psal. lxxxvi. 11. "Israel would none of me."

2. But this offering violence is hard, and I shall never be able to go through it.

Admit it be hard, yet it is a duty, and there is no disputing duty. God hath made the way to heaven hard—

To try our obedience. A child obeys his father, though he commands him hard things. Peter's obedience and love were tried when Christ bade him come to him upon the water.

God doth it that he may raise the price of heavenly things. Were the kingdom of glory easily obtained, we should not have valued it to its worth. Such is our nature, that we slight things which are easily come by. If pearls were common, they would soon fall in their price. If Christ and heaven might be had without violence, these blessings of the first magnitude would not have been had in such high veneration.

But let not the difficulty be objected. What though salvation-work be hard?

1st. Is it not harder to lie in hell? is not suffering vengeance worse than offering violence?

2nd. We do not argue so in other things. An estate is hard to come by, therefore we will sit still; No, difficulty doth the more whet and

sharpen our endeavour; and if we take such pains for these inferior things, how should we for that which is more noble and sublime! the profit will abundantly countervail the labour.

3rd. Though the business of religion at first seems hard, yet when once we are entered into it it is pleasant. When the wheels of the soul are oiled with grace, now a Christian moves in religion with facility and delight, Rom. vii. 22. "I delight in the law of God in the inward man." Christ's yoke at the first putting on seems heavy; but when once it is on, it is easy. To serve God, to love God, to enjoy God, is the sweetest freedom in the world. The poets say the top of Olympus is always quiet. The first climbing up the rocky hill of heaven is hard to flesh and blood; but when we are gotten up towards the top, there is peace and delight; we see a pleasant prospect, and are ready to cry out as Peter on the mount of transfiguration, "It is good to be here." What hidden manna do we now find! this is the anticipation or foretaste of glory.

3. But if I put myself upon this violent exercise in religion, then I shall lose that pleasure I have in my sin, my mirth and melody, and I shall exchange delight for labour; and so I shall be no more Naomi, but Marah. Voluptuous persons speak as the fig-tree in the parable, Judg. ix. Shall I leave my fatness and sweetness, all my

former pleasures, and now offer violence to heaven, live a strict mortified life? This crosseth the stream of corrupt nature.

Leave the pleasure in sin. The Scripture doth so describe sin, that one would think there should be little pleasure in it. The Scripture calls it,

1st. A “debt.” Sin is compared to a debt of “ten thousand talents,” Matt. xviii. 24. A talent of gold among the Hebrews, was valued at almost four thousand pounds. Ten thousand talents is a figurative speech, to express how great a debt sin is; and do you call this a pleasure; is it any pleasure for a man to be in debt? ;

2nd. The Scripture calls sin a “disease,” Isa. i. 5. “The whole head is sick.” Is it any pleasure to be sick? Though all do not feel this sickness, yet the less the distemper is felt, the more mortal.

3rd. The Scripture compares sin to “gall and wormwood,” Deut. xxix. 18. It breeds a bitter worm in the conscience. What a worm did Spira feel? Sin stings a man with wrath, John iii. 34. And do you call this a pleasure? sure you “put bitter for sweet,” Isa. v. 20.

The pleasures of sin do gratify only the sensitive part of man, not the rational. Pleasures are called carnal, because they delight only the body. How absurd was that speech of the rich man in the Gospel, when he was speaking of his store of goods, and his barns being full! “Soul, take thine

ease," Luke xii. 19. He might have said more properly, 'Body, take thine ease;' for his soul was never the better for his riches, nor could it feel any delight in them. Though his barns were full, his soul was empty. Therefore when Satan tells thee, if thou usest violence for heaven, thou wilt lose all thy pleasures: ask him, What pleasures are they, Satan? such as please only the senses; they do not delight the mind: they do not comfort the conscience; they are such delights wherein the brute creatures do exceed me.

4th. These sugared pleasures in sin the Scripture saith, are but "for a season," Heb. xi. 25. like fire in straw which makes a blaze, but is presently out, 1 John ii. 17. "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof." It passeth away swiftly as a ship under sail. Worldly pleasures perish in the using, like a flying shadow, or flash of lightning; and are these to be preferred before an eternal weight of glory?

5th. The present sweetness which is in sin will turn to bitterness at last. Like the book the prophet eat, (Ezek. iii. 3.) sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. Honey is sweet, but it turns to choler. Sin is a sweet poison; it delights the palate, but torments the bowels. When once the sinner's eyes come to be opened at death, and he feels some sparks of God's wrath in his conscience, then he will cry out for horror, and be ready to lay violent hands upon himself. We may say of

the pleasures of sin, as Solomon of wine, Prov. xxiii. 32. "Look not on the wine when it is red, when it shews its colour in the glass; afterwards it bites like a serpent." So look not on the smiling pleasures of sin: be not delighted with its beauty, but affrighted with its sting. Do the damned in hell feel any pleasure now in their sins? Hath their cup of wrath one drop of honey in it? Oh, remember, after the golden crowns, and women's hair, come the lion's teeth, Rev. ix. 8. Thus I have answered the first part of the objection; I shall lose all my pleasures in sin.

If I put forth this violence in religion, I shall exchange my delight for labour. I must dig away through the rock, and while I work I must weep.

Though you must use violence, yet it is a sweet violence; it is a labour turned into delight, Ps. cxxxviii. 5. "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord." To send out faith as a spy to view the heavenly Canaan, and pluck a bunch of grapes there; what delight is here! (Rom. xv. 13.) "joy in believing." To love God (in whom all excellencies are combined) how sweet is it! To love beauty is delightful. To walk among the promises as among beds of spices, and taste the fruit, oh how pleasant! The labour of a Christian brings peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost. But labour itself helpeth. And whereas it is said that this holy violence takes away our joy, and while we work we must weep; I answer, a Chris-

tian would not be without these tears. 'The tears of a saint (saith Bernard) have more true joy in them, than all worldly delights. The "oil of joy" is for mourners, Isa. lxi. 3.

4. I would use this violence for heaven, but I shall expose myself to the censure and scorn of others. They will wonder to see me so altered, and think it nothing but a religious phrensy.

Consider who reproach thee; they are the wicked; such as if Christ were alive on earth, would reproach him. They are blinded by the god of the world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is as if a blind man should reproach a beautiful face.

What do they reproach thee for? It is for offering violence to heaven. Is it a disgrace to be labouring for a kingdom? Tell them thou art doing the work that God hath set thee about. Better they should reproach thee for working in the vineyard, than God damn thee for not working.

Jesus Christ was reproached for thy sake, Heb. xii. 2. "He endured the shame of the cross;" and wilt not thou be contented to bear^v reproaches for him? These are but the chips of the cross, which are rather to be despised than laid to heart.

5. If I use this holy violence, and turn religious, then I shall lose such yearly profits which my sin hath brought in. As Amaziah said, "What shall I do for the hundred talents?" 2 Chron. xxv. 9.

Is there any profit in sin? Did ever any one

thrive upon that trade? By that time you have east up the reckoning, you will find but little profit.

1st. By the incomes that sin brings in, thou treasurest up vengeance, Rom. ii. 5. While thou puttest unjust gain in the bag, God puts wrath in his vial; and will you call this profit? Whatever a man gets in a sinful way, he must pay interest for it in hell.

2nd. That cannot be for thy profit, which makes thee come off a loser at last. Thou loseth heaven and thy soul; and what can countervail this loss? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xiv. 26. God (saith Chrysostom) hath given a man two eyes; if he lose one, he hath another; but he hath but one soul, and if that soul be lost, he is undone for ever.

6. But I have so much business in the world, that I can find no time for this holy violence. As the king of Macedon said, when they presented him with a book treating of happiness, *I am not at leisure.*

See the folly of this objection. What is the main business of life, but looking after the soul? And for men to say they are so immersed in the world, that they cannot mind their souls, is most absurd and irrational. This is to make the greater give way to the lesser. As if an husbandman should say, he is so busy in angling, or looking

after his bees, that he hath no time to plough or sow. What is his occupation but ploughing? Such a madness is it to hear men say, they are so taken up about the world, that they have no time for their souls.

Could God find time to think of thy salvation? Could Jesus Christ find time to come into the world, and be here above thirty years in carrying on this great design of thy redemption, and canst thou find no time to look after it? Is the getting a little money that which obstructs this violence for heaven? "Thy money perish with thee."

Canst thou find time for thy body, time to eat and sleep, and not find time for thy soul? Canst thou find time to employ about thy recreation, and no time to employ about thy salvation? Canst thou find time for idle visits, and no time to visit the throne of grace?

Oh take heed thou goest not to hell in the crowd of worldly business! Joshua, who was a commander of an army, yet his work as a soldier was not to hinder his work as a Christian: he must pray as well as fight; and take the book of the law in his hand, as well as the sword, Josh. i. 8.

Thou, whosoever thou art, that makest this objection about worldly business, let me ask thee, Dost thou think in thy conscience that this will be a good excuse at the last day, when God shall ask thee, Why didst thou not take pains for heaven?

thou shalt say, Lord I was so steeped in worldly business, that I was hindered. Were it a good plea for a servant to say to his master, he was so drunk that he could not work? Truly, it is much like thine to say, thou wert so drunk with the cares of the world, that thou couldst not be violent for the kingdom.

Having answered these objections, let me re-assume the exhortation, pressing all Christians to this violence for the heavenly kingdom, as David's three worthies ventured their lives, and brake through the host of the Philistines for water, 2 Sam. xxiii. 16. Such a kind of violence must we use, breaking through all dangers for obtaining the "water of life."

1. Consider the deplorable condition we are in by nature; a state of misery and damnation: therefore what violence should we use to get out of it! Were one plunged into quicksands, would he not use violence to get out? Sin is a quicksand, and is it not wisdom to extricate ourselves out? David being encompassed with enemies, said, his soul was among lions, Psal. lvii. 4. It is true in a spiritual sense, our soul is among lions. Every sin is a lion that would devour us, and if we are in the lion's den, shall we not use violence to get out? The angels used violence to Lot; they laid hold on him, and pulled him out of Sodom, Gen. xix. 16. Such violence must be

used to get out of the spiritual Sodom. It is no safety to stay in the enemy's quarters.

2. It is possible that in the use of means we may arrive at happiness. Impossibility destroys endeavour: but here is a door of hope opened. The thing is feasible. It is not with us as with the damned in hell; there is a tomb-stone rolled over them. But while we are under the sound of Aaron's bell, and the silver trumpet of the Gospel is blown in our ears; while the Spirit of grace breathes on us, and we are on this side the grave, there is great hope that by holy violence we may win Paradise. An absolute impossibility of salvation is only for them who have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, and cannot repent; but who these are is a secret sealed up in God's book: else here is a great encouragement to all to be serious and earnest in the matters of eternity, because they are yet in a capacity of mercy; no final sentence is already passed. God hath not yet taken up the draw-bridge of mercy.—Though the gate of Paradise is strait, yet it is not shut. This should be as oil to the wheels, to make us lively and active in the business of salvation; therefore, as the husbandman “ploughs in hope,” (James v.) so we should pray in hope; do all our work for heaven in hope; for the white flag of mercy is yet held forth! So long as there was corn to be had in Egypt, the sons of Jacob would not sit starving at home, Gen. xlii. 3. So there is

a kingdom to be obtained; therefore let us not sit starving in our sins any longer.

This violence for heaven is the grand business of our lives: what did we come into the world for else? we did not come hither only to eat and drink, and wear fine clothes; but the end of our living is, to be violent for the kingdom of glory. Should the body only be tended, this were to trim the scabbard, and let the blade rust: to preserve the lumber, and let the child be burnt. God sends us into the world as a merchant sends his factor to trade for him beyond the seas. So God sends us hither to follow a spiritual trade, to serve him and save our souls. If we spend all our time in dressing and pampering our bodies, or idle visits, we shall give but a sad account to God, when he shall send us a letter of summons by death, and bid us "give an account of our stewardship." Were not he much to be blamed that should have a great deal of timber given him to build him an house, and he should cut out all this brave timber into chips? Just so is the case of many; God gives them precious time in which they are to provide for a kingdom, and they waste this time of life, and cut it out all into chips. Let this excite violence in the things of God; it is the main errand of our living here; shall we go out of the world and forget our errand?

4. How violent are the wicked in ways of sin!

violent for their malicious lusts, Prov. i. 16. "Their feet run to evil." Violent for their unclean lusts. Annon offered violence to his sister; he would have his lust, though it cost him his life. Sinners tire out themselves in the devil's drudgery, Jer. ix. 5. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." They are out of breath with sin, yet not out of love with sin, Jer. l. 38. "They are mad upon their idols." So violent were the Jews, that they would spare no cost in their idolatrous worship, Isa. xlv. 6. "They lavish gold out of the bag." So fiercely were they bent upon idolatry, that they would sacrifice their sons and daughters to their idol gods, Jer xxxii. 35. "They built the high places of Baal to cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire." Were men thus violent for their lusts and idols, and shall not we be violent for a kingdom? Nay, you that are now ingrafted into Christ, how violent perhaps have some of you been formerly in evil! How did you once spend yourselves in a sinful way, like Paul, who before his conversion "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord!" Acts ix. 1. Perhaps you have been violent in drawing others to sin, you have been tempters to them; and perhaps some of them whom you have seduced to sin, are now crying out to you in hell, and saying, they had never come there if it had not been for your example; should not the consideration of this

humble you? Should not this make you the more violent in religion, that you may bring some glory to God before you die? Should not you be as industrious to save souls, as you have been to damn them? Were you to live to the age of Methuselah, you could never do God service sufficient for the dishonour you have done to him.

5. This holy violence hath much delight mingled with it, Prov. iii. 17. "All her ways are pleasantness." Though the way of religion hath thorns in it, in respect of persecution, yet it is full of roses, in respect of that inward peace and content that the soul finds in it. A man is violent at his recreation; but there is an inward delight he takes in it which sweetens that violence. St. Paul made religion his recreation, Rom. vii. 22. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." In the Greek, *I take pleasure*; not only heaven itself is delightful, but the way thither. What ravishing delight hath a gracious soul in prayer! Isa. lvi. 7. "I will make them joyful in the house of prayer." What delight in holy contemplation! A Christian hath such illapses of the Spirit, and meets with such transfigurations of soul, that he thinks himself half in heaven. Serving of God is like gathering of spices, or flowers, wherein there is some labour, but the labour is recompensed with delight. The way of sin hath bitterness in it. The bears, while they lick the honey, are stung with the bees. So while men are follow-

ing their lusts ; they have checks of conscience, which are a foretaste of hell. Better want the honey, than have this sting. But the violence for heaven is spiced with such joy, that it is not labour, but pleasure.

6. This violence and activity of spirit in religion, puts a lustre upon a Christian. The more excellent any thing is, the more active. The sun is a glorious creature, as a giant “ it runs its race,” Psal. xix. 5. Fire, the noblest element, sparkles vigorously. The angels are described with wings, Isa. vi. 2. which is an emblem of their swift obedience. The more violent we are in religion, the more angelical we are.

7. How violent was Christ about our salvation ! He was in an agony ; he “ continued all night in prayer,” Luke vi. 12. He wept, he fasted, he died a violent death ; he rose violently out of the grave. Was Christ so violent for our salvation, and doth it not become us to be violent, who are so nearly concerned in it ? Christ’s violence was not only satisfactory, but exemplary. It was not only to appease God, but to teach us. Christ was violent in dying, to teach us to be violent in believing.

8. This holy violence brings rest ; motion tends to rest, Heb. iv. 9. “ There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” Indeed, there is a motion which doth not tend to rest : they who are violent in a way of sin, shall never have rest, Rev. iv. 8. “ They rest not day and night.” Such as are grace-

less, shall be restless. But the violence a Christian takes, leads to rest; as the weary traveller sits down at night and rests him, Psal cxvi. 7. "Return to thy rest, O my soul." Holy violence is like the flying of Noah's dove to the ark, where it found rest.

9. If we use what violence we are able, God will help us, Phil. ii. 12. "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do." The Spirit helps us in prayer, and so proportionably in all other duties of religion, Rom. viii. 26. The promise encourageth, and the Spirit enableth. In all earthly races a man runs in his own strength; but in the race to heaven we have the Spirit of God helping us; he not only gives us the crown, when we have done running, but he gives us legs to run; he gives exciting and assisting grace; the Spirit of God helping, makes our work easy. If another helps to carry a burden, it is less difficult. If the loadstone draw the iron, it is not hard for the iron to move. If the Spirit of God, as a divine loadstone, draw and move the heart in obedience; now the work goes on with more facility.

10. This blessed violence in religion, would be preventive of much sin. While men are idle in the vineyard, they are a prey to every temptation. We do not sow our seed in fallow ground; but Satan doth sow most of his seed of temptation in hearts that lie fallow. When he sees persons unemployed, he will find them work to do; he will stir them up

to one sin or other, Matt. xiii. 25. "While men slept, the enemy sowed tares." When Satan finds men in a drowsy condition, their sleeping time is his tempting time; but by holy violence we prevent the devil's design; we are so busied about salvation, that we have no leisure to listen to a temptation. St. Jerome gave his friend this advice,—to be always well employed, that when Satan came with a temptation he might find him working in the vineyard. When the bird is flying it is safe; when it sits still on the bough, then it is in danger of being shot.—When a Christian sits still, and is inactive, now the devil shoots him with his fiery darts.

11. The folly of such as are violent for the world, but not for the kingdom above. Alas! how insipid are all these things that we lay out our sweat and violence upon! they will not make us happy. King Solomon did as it were put all the creatures into a limbeck, and still out the quintessence of them; and "behold all was vanity," Eccles. ii. 8.

1st. These earthly things that we so toil for, are uncertain, 1 Tim. vi. 17. It is uncertain whether we shall get them. All that are suitors to a virgin do not speed. All that come to a lottery have not a prize.

2nd. They are unsatisfactory. Could men heap up silver as dust; had they as much as the devil promised Christ, "all the kingdoms of the world,

and the glory of them," yet they can no more fill the heart. than a drop of water can fill the cistern, Eccles. v. 16. "What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind?"

3rd. They are transient; death feeds at the root. All worldly possessions are like a castle of snow in the sun; or like a posy of flowers which withers while we are smelling to it. Oh what folly is it to put forth all one's violence for the world, which is but for a season, and not for Christ and grace! As if a condemned man should be in earnest to get his dinner, but never mind getting his pardon.

12. The next motive is in the text; this violence is for a kingdom. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. And what will we be violent for, if not for a kingdom? Men will wade to a kingdom through blood: this is a kingdom worth striving for. Cyprus is an island so exceeding fertile and pleasant, that it was anciently called *Macaria*, which signifies blessed. This title of blessed may more fitly be given to the heavenly kingdom. If the mountains were gold; if every sand of the sea were a diamond; if the whole globe were a shining chrysolite, it were infinitely beneath the glory of this kingdom.

1st. The immunities of the heavenly kingdom are great.

1. There shall be a freedom from sin; here sin keeps house with us; it is as natural to us to sin as to breathe. The soul that is most refined, and

clarified by grace, is not without some dregs of corruption. St. Paul cried out of a body of sin. He who is inoculated into Christ hath still a taste and relish of the wild olive; but when we ascend to the heavenly kingdom, this mantle of sin shall drop off. That kingdom is so pure, that it will not mix with any corruption, Rev. xxi. 27. A sinful thought shall not creep in there. There is beauty which is not stained with lust, and honour which is not swelled with pride.

2. In that blessed kingdom there shall be freedom from the assaults of the red dragon. It is sad to have Satan daily soliciting us by his temptations, and labouring to trepan us into sin. Temptation is the devil's powder-plot, to blow up the fort-royal of our grace; but this is the blessed freedom of the heavenly kingdom, it is not capable of temptation. The old serpent is cast out of Paradise.

3. In that blessed kingdom there shall be freedom from divisions. In this world God's own tribes go to war. Ephraim envies Judah, and Judah vexeth Ephraim. The soldier's spear pierced Christ's side; but the divisions of saints pierce his heart. Christ prayed that all his people might be one, as he and his Father are one, John xvii. 21. But how do Christians by their discords and animosities go about to do what in them lies to frustrate Christ's prayer! But in the kingdom of heaven there is perfect love, which, as it casts out fear, so

strife. Those Christians that could not live quietly together here, in that kingdom shall be united. There Calvin and Luther are agreed. In that celestial kingdom there shall be no vilifying or slandering one another, or raking into those sores which Christ died to heal. Christians that could not pray together, shall sing together in that glorious choir: there shall not be one jarring string in the saints' music.

4. In that heavenly kingdom there shall be freedom from all molestations. Our lives now are interlined with troubles, Psa. xxxi. 10. "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." There are many things to occasion disquiet; sometimes poverty afflicts; sometimes sickness tortures; sometimes unkindness of friends breaks the heart. Our lives, like the Irish seas, are full of tempests; but in the kingdom of heaven is nothing to administer grief; there all is serene and calm: nothing within to humble, or without to molest.

2nd. The royalties and excellences of that kingdom are great. We may say of heaven, as it was said of Laish, Judg. xviii. 9, 10. "We have seen the land, and behold it is very good; a place where there is no want of any thing."

The heavenly kingdom abounds with riches, Rev. xxi. 21. "The twelve gates were twelve pearls." Earthly kingdoms are fain to traffic abroad for gold and spices: in the kingdom of

God are all rarities to be had, all commodities of its own growth; therefore figured by the tree of life, bearing several sorts of fruit, Rev. xxii. 2. How rich is that place where the blessed Deity shines forth in its immense glory infinitely beyond the comprehension of angels.

The delights of the heavenly kingdom are unmixed. The comforts here below are chequered. Honour may be stained with disgrace; joy interlarded with sorrow. Our stars are mixed with clouds; but the delicacies of heaven are pure as well as pleasant. There is honey that hath not one drop of gall. The crystal spring of joy hath no settling of sorrow at bottom. The rose in that Paradise is without prickles; the sun in that horizon is without eclipse.

3rd. This kingdom above is durable, it knows no end.

Suppose earthly kingdoms to be more glorious than they are, their foundations of gold, their walls of pearl, their windows of sapphire, yet they are corruptible, Hos. i. 4. "I will cause the kingdom to cease." Troy and Athens now lie buried in their own ruins. But the kingdom of glory, as it is made without hands, so without end. It is the "everlasting kingdom," 2 Pet. i. 11. Now methinks, if ever we will use violence, it should be for this kingdom; this kingdom will make amends for all our labour and pains. Cæsar marching with his army towards Rome, and hear-

ing that all the people were fled from it, said, They that will not fight for this city, what city will they fight for? So if we will not put forth violence for this kingdom of heaven, what will we be violent for? I say to all, as the children of Dan in another sense. Judg. xviii, 9. "We have seen the land, and behold it is very good; and are ye still? Be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land."

13. The more violence we have used for heaven, the sweeter heaven will be when we come there. As when a man hath been grafting trees, or setting flowers in his garden, it is pleasant to review and look over his labours; so in heaven, when we shall remember our former zeal and activity for the kingdom, it will sweeten heaven, and add to the joy of it. For a Christian to think, such a day I spent in examining my heart; such a day I was weeping for sin; when others were at their sport, I was at my prayers; and now, have I lost any thing by this violence? My tears are wiped away, and the wine of Paradise cheers my heart. I now enjoy him "whom my soul loves;" I now have the crown and white robes I so longed for. Oh how pleasant will it be to think, this is the heaven my Saviour bled for, and I sweat for.

14. The more violence we put forth in religion, the greater measure of glory we shall have. That

there are degrees of glory in heaven, seems to me beyond dispute.

1. There are degrees of torment in hell ; therefore by the rule of contraries, degrees of glory in heaven.

2. The Scripture speaks of a “prophet’s reward,” (Matt. x. 41.) which is a degree above others.

3. The saints are said to shine “as the stars,” Dan. xii. Now one star differeth from another in glory. So that there are gradations of happiness ; and of this judgment is Calvin ; as also many of the ancient fathers. Consider then seriously, the more violent we are for heaven, and the more work we do for God, the greater will be our reward. The hotter our zeal, the brighter our crown. Could we hear the blessed souls departed speaking to us from heaven, sure thus they would say, Were we to leave heaven a while, and to dwell on the earth again, we would do God a thousand times more service than ever we have done ; we would pray with more life, act with more zeal ; for now we see, the more hath been our labour, the more astonishing is our joy, and the more flourishing our crown.

15. Upon our violence for the kingdom, God hath promised merey, Matt. vii. 7. “Ask and it shall be given you ; seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened to you.”

1. "Ask." Ask with importunity. A faint asking begs a denial. King Ahasuerus stood with his golden sceptre, and said to queen Esther, "Ask, and it shall be given to the half of the kingdom." But God saith more: Ask, and he will give the whole kingdom, Luke xii. 32. It is observable, the door of the tabernacle was not of brass, but had a thin covering, a vail, that they might easily enter into it; so the door of heaven is through Christ's blood made easy, that our prayers put up in fervency may enter. Upon our asking, God hath promised to give his Spirit, Luke xi. 13. And if he give his Spirit, he will give the kingdom: the Spirit first anoints, 1 John ii. 27. and after its anointing oil comes the crown.

2. "Seek and ye shall find." But, is it not said, "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able?" Luke xiii. 24. I answer, that is, because they did seek in a wrong manner.

1st. They did seek ignorantly, setting up an altar to an unknown god. It is ill seeking pearls in the dark. Ignorant people seek heaven by their good meanings: they seek in the dark, and no wonder they miss of salvation.

2nd. They did seek proudly. They sought heaven by their own merits; whereas we are to seek the kingdom in Christ's strength, and in his name.

3rd. They did seek lazily; as the spouse sought Christ on her bed, and found him not, (Cant. iii. 1.)

so many seek Christ in a supine manner; they seek, but they do not strive.

4th. They did seek hypocritically: they would have heaven and their lusts too. Like that protestant prince Cambden speaks of, who set up one altar in the same church to the true God, and another to the idol. But let not such seekers ever think to find happiness; let them not think to lie in Dalilah's lap, and go to Abraham's bosom when they die.

5th. They did seek inconstantly; because mercy did not come presently they gave over seeking.

But else if we seek the kingdom of heaven cordially, God hath pawned his truth in a promise, we shall find, Jer. xxix.13. "Then shall ye find me, when you search for me with all your heart."

3. "Knock and it shall be opened." Knocking implies violence. But we must do as Peter, Acts xii. 16. He continued knocking. We must continue knocking by prayer, and heaven-gate shall be opened. How may this be as oil to the wheels! How may it excite holy violence, when we have so gracious a promise of mercy upon our earnest seeking of it!

16. This holy violence will not hinder men in secular employments. Violence for the kingdom, and diligence in a calling, are not inconsistent. Christians, you may work for heaven, yet work in a trade. God hath given you a body and a soul,

and he hath allotted you time to provide for both: he hath given you a body, therefore be diligent in your calling; he hath given you a soul, therefore be violent for heaven. These two may well stand together, providing for a family, and praying in a family. He that doth not exercise himself in some honest employment, is guilty of the breach of that commandment, "Six days shalt thou labour." God never sealed warrants for idleness. The sluggard shall be indicted at the day of judgment for letting his field be over-run with thorns. They are hypocrites who talk of living by faith, but refuse to live in a calling. Only remember, that the pains you take in religion must exceed the other, Matt. vi. 33. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God:" first, in order of time, before all things; and first in order of affection, above all things. Your soul is the nobler part, therefore that must be chiefly looked after. In your calling shew diligence; in religion violence.

But some may say, We are so incumbered in the world, that all time for religion is swallowed up; we cannot get leave from our calling to read or pray.

If your trade be such that you cannot allow yourselves time for your souls, then your trade is unlawful. There are two things make a trade unlawful.

1. When persons deal in such commodities as

they know cannot be used without sin.—Selling of black spots, or idolatrous pictures and crucifixes.

2. When their trade doth so involve them in worldly business, that they cannot mind eternity, or make out one sally to the throne of grace. They are so much in the shop, that they cannot be in the closet. If there be such a trade to be found, doubtless it is unlawful, but let not men lay it upon their trade, but upon themselves; their trade would give them leave to serve God, but their covetousness will not give them leave. Oh how many put a fallacy upon their own souls, and cheat themselves into hell.

17. There is but a short space of time granted us, therefore work the harder for heaven before it be too late. Indeed we are apt to dream of a long life, as if we were not sojourners, but natives, and were to stay here always. The blossom of childhood hopes to come to the budding of youth; and the bud of youth hopes to come to the flower of age; and the flower of age hopes to come to old age; and old age hopes to renew its strength as the eagle: but if we measure life by a pair of scripture compasses, it is very short: it is compared to a “flying shadow,” Job. viii. 17. to an “hand-breadth,” Psal. xxxix. 5. as if there were but a span between the cradle and the grave. Is the time of life so short, and may be shorter than we are aware? what need is there zealously

to improve it before it be slipped away ! if time runs, let us “so run,” 1 Cor. ix. 24. He that hath a great business in hand, and the time allotted for doing it is but short, had not need lose any of that time. A traveller that hath many miles to ride, and the night ready to approach, had need spur on the harder, that the night doth not overtake him : so we have a long journey, and the night of death is drawing on, how should we use spurs to our sluggish hearts, that we may go on more swiftly !

18. A man’s personal day of grace may be short. There is a time while the sceptre of grace is held forth, 2 Cor. vi. 2. “Now is the accepted time.” The Lord hath prefixed a time wherein the means of grace shall work or not work. If a person come not in by such a time, God may say, “Never fruit grow on thee more.” A sign this day of grace is past, when conscience hath done speaking, and God’s Spirit hath done striving. Whether this day may be longer or shorter, we cannot tell ; but because it may so soon expire, it is wisdom to take the present opportunity, and use all violence for heaven. The day of grace hastens away : no man can (like Joshua) bid this sun stand still ; and if this critical day be once past, it cannot be recalled. The day of grace being lost, the next is a day of wrath. Jerusalem had a day, but she lost it, Luke xix. 44. “If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day,

the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." After the expiration of the day of grace, no means or mercies shall prove effectual: now they are hid from thine eyes; which is like the ringing a doleful knell over a dying person; therefore put forth all violence for heaven, and do it in this, before it be too late, and the decree be gone forth.

19. If you neglect the offering violence now, there will be no help for you after death. When men shall open their eyes in another world, and see into what a damned condition they have sinned themselves, oh now what would they not do, what violence would they not use, if there were a possibility they might be saved! When once the door of mercy is shut, if God would make new terms far harder than before, they would readily seal to them. If God should say to the sinner after death, Wouldst thou be content to return to the earth, and live there under the horror of persecution a thousand years for my sake? Yes, Lord, I will subscribe to this, and endure the world's fury, may I have but thy favour at last. But, wilt thou be content to serve an apprenticeship in hell a thousand years, where thou shalt feel the worm gnawing, and the fire burning? Yes, Lord, even in hell I submit to be: so that after a thousand years I may have a release, and that bitter cup may pass away from me. But, wilt thou for every lie thou hast told,

endure the rack? wilt thou for every oath that thou hast sworn, fill a bottle of tears? wilt thou for every sin thou hast committed, lay ten thousand years in sackcloth and ashes? Yes, Lord, all this and more if thou requirest, I will subscribe to; I am content now to use any violence, if I may but at last be admitted into thy kingdom. No, will God say, there shall be no such condition proposed to thee, no possibility of favour, but thou shalt lie for ever among the damned, and “who is able to dwell with everlasting burnings?” Oh therefore be wise in time; now, while God’s terms are more easy, embrace Christ and heaven; for after death there will be nothing to be done for your souls. The sinner and the furnace shall never be parted.

20. How without all apology will you be left, if you neglect this violence for heaven! Methinks I hear God thus expostulating the case with sinners at the last day, Why did you not take pains for heaven? Hath not there been a prophet among you? Did not my ministers “lift up their voice like a trumpet?” Did not they warn you? Did not they persuade you to use this violence, telling you that your salvation depended upon it? but the most melting rhetoric of the Gospel would not move you. Did not I give you time to look after your souls? Rev. ii. 21. “I gave her space to repent.” Did not you promise in your vow in baptism, that you would take heaven by force; fighting under my banner against world, flesh, and

devil? Why then did you not use violence for the kingdom? It must be either sloth or obstinacy. You could be violent for other things, for the world, for your lusts, but not for the kingdom of heaven. What can you say for yourselves, why the sentence of damnation should not pass? Oh how will men be confounded and left speechless at such a time, and God's justice shall be cleared in their condemnation! Ps. li. 4. "That thou mayest be clear when thou judgest." Though the sinner shall drink a sea of wrath, yet not one drop of injustice.

21. What a vexation it will be at last to lose the kingdom of glory for want of a little violence. When one shall think with himself, I did something in religion, but I was not violent enough; I prayed, but I should have brought fire to the sacrifice. I heard the word, but I should have received the truth in love; I humbled myself with fasting, but I should with humiliation have joined reformation. I gave Christ's poor good words; I did bid them be warmed, but I should have clothed and fed them, and for want of a little more violence I have lost the kingdom. The prophet bade the king of Israel smite upon the ground, (2 Kings xiii. 18.) and he "smote thrice, and stayed; and the man of God was wroth, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria, till thou hadst consumed it. So a man doth something in religion, he smites thrice, and then stays; whereas, had he but put forth a little more

violence for heaven, he had been saved. What a mischief is this but to half do one's work, and by shooting short to lose the kingdom! Oh, how will this cut a man to the heart when he is in hell, to think, had I but gone a little farther it had been better with me than it is now; I had not been thus tormented in the flame.

22. The examples of the saints of old, who have taken heaven by force. David broke his sleep for meditation, Ps. cxix. 148. His violence for heaven was boiled up to zeal, Ps. cxix. 139. "My zeal hath consumed me." And St. Paul did reach forth unto those things which were before. The Greek word signifies to stretch out the neck: a metaphor taken from racers that strain every limb, and reach forward to lay hold upon the prize. We read of Anna, a prophetess, Luke ii. 37. "She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." How industrious was Calvin in the Lord's vineyard! When his friends persuaded him for his health sake, to remit a little of his labours, saith he, "Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?" Luther spent three hours a day in prayer. It is said of holy Bradford, preaching, reading, and prayer, was his whole life. "I rejoice," said bishop Jewel, that my body is exhausted in the labours of my holy calling." How violent were the blessed martyrs! they wore their fetters as ornaments; they snatched up torments as crowns, and embraced the flames as cheerfully as

Elijah did the fiery chariot that came to fetch him to heaven, "Let racks, fires, pullies, and all manner of torments come, so I may win Christ," saith Ignatius. These pious souls "resisted unto blood." How should this provoke our zeal! Write after these fair copies.

23. If the saints with all their violence have much ado to get to heaven, how shall they come there who use no violence, 1 Pet. iv. 18. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" If they that strive as in an agony can hardly get in at the strait gate, what shall become of them that never strive at all? If St. Paul did keep under his body, by prayer, watching, fasting, (1 Cor. ix. 27.) how shall they be saved, that wholly let loose the reins to the flesh, and bathe themselves in the luscious streams of carnal pleasure.

24. This sweating for heaven is not to endure long, (1 Pet. v. 10.) after "ye have suffered awhile." So after ye have offered violence awhile, there shall be an end put to it. Your labour shall expire with your life. It is but a while and you shall have done weeping, wrestling, praying; it is but a while and the race will be over, and you shall receive "the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 1, 9. It is but a while and you shall have done your weary marches, you shall put off your armour, and put on white robes, when the war is over.

How should this excite a spirit of holy violence! It is but a few months or days, and you shall reap the sweet fruit of your obedience. The winter will be past, and the spring flowers of joy shall appear. Doctor Taylor comforted himself when he was going to the stake, ‘I have but two stiles to go over, and I shall be at my Father’s house.’ Christians, ye have but a little way to go, a little more violence, a few more tears shed, a few more sabbaths kept, and then your hopes shall be crowned with the beatifical sight of God. When the vapour is blown away, then we may see the sun clearly: so when this short vapour of life is blown away, then we shall behold Christ the Sun of Righteousness in all his glory, 1 John iii. 2. “We shall see him as he is.”

25. If you are not violent for heaven, you walk antipodes to your own prayers. You pray that God’s will may be done by you on earth, as it is in heaven: now how is God’s will done in heaven? Are not the angels swift in doing the will of God, like the stars above the equinoctial, that are moved many millions of miles in an hour? The seraphims are described with wings, to shew how velocitous and winged they are in their obedience, Isa. vi. 2. Now if you are not violent in your spiritual motion, you live in a contradiction to your own prayers. You are far from being as angels; you creep as snails in the way to heaven.

26. This holy and blessed violence would make Christians willing to die. What is it makes men so loath to die? They are as a tenant that is loath to go out of an house; why so? because their conscience accuseth them that they have little or no pains for heaven: they have been sleeping, when they should have been working, and now death looks ghastly; they are afraid death will carry them prisoners to hell: whereas the Christian that hath been active in religion, and hath spent his time in the service of God, he can look death in the face with comfort. He who hath been violent for heaven in this life, need not fear a violent death. Death shall do him no hurt, it shall not be a destruction, but a deliverance: it shall purge out sin, and perfect glory. What made St. Paul say "I desire to be dissolved?" Phil. i. 23. Surely the reason was, he had been a man of violence; he did spend himself for Christ, and "laboured more than all the other apostles," (1 Cor. xv. 10.) and now he knew there was a crown laid up for him. Augustus the emperor did desire that he might have a quiet easy death. If any thing make our pillow easy at death, and we go out of the world quietly, it will be this holy violence that we have put forth in the business of religion.

27. If for all that hath been said, you will either sit still, or keep your sweat for something else than heaven, know, there is a time shortly

coming when you will wish you had used this violence. When sickness seizeth on you, and your disease begins to grow violent, and you think God's serjeant is at the door, then what wishes will you make: Oh that I had been more violent for heaven! Oh that I had been praying when I was dancing and making merry! Oh that I had had a Bible in my hand, when I had a pack of cards! how happy then might I have been! but alas, my case is miserable! what shall I do! I am so sick, that I cannot live, and so sinful, that I dare not die! Oh that God would respite me a little longer, that he would put a few years more in my lease, that a little space might be granted me to recover my lost hours! As one said on her death-bed, 'Call time again;' but time will not be called again. At the hour of death sinners will awake out of their lethargy, and fall into a frenzy of horror and despair; and shall not all these arguments prevail with men to be violent for the kingdom? What an hardened piece is a sinner's heart! We read that at Christ's passion, the "rocks rent," (Matt. xxvii. 51.) but nothing will move a sinner; the rocks will sooner rend than his heart. If all that I have said will not prevail, it is a sign ruin is certain, 1 Sam. ii. 25. "They hearkened not to the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them."

Yet this caution I must necessarily insert, though we shall not obtain the kingdom without violence,

yet not for our violence. When we have done all, look up to Christ and free grace. Bellarmine saith, we merit heaven, *ex congruo*. No, though we are saved in the use of means, yet by grace too, Ephes. ii. 5. "By grace ye are saved." Heaven is a donative, Luke xii. 32. "It is my Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom." Why, may one say, I have used violence for it, I have wrought for the kingdom: Ay, but it is a gift that free grace bestows. We must look up to Christ for acceptance: not our sweat, but his blood saves: our labouring qualifies us for heaven, but Christ's dying purchased heaven. Alas! what is all that we can do in comparison of glory? what is the shedding of a tear to a crown? Therefore we must renounce all in point of justification, and let Christ and free grace carry away the glory of our salvation. God must help us in our working, Phil. ii. 12. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." How then can we merit by our working, when it is God that helps us in our working?

I shall in the next place lay down some rules or directions, how to get this blessed violence.

1. Take heed, of those things which will hinder this violence for heaven.

Take heed of unbelief. Unbelief is a great hindrance, as it is discouraging. When a Christian is working for heaven, unbelief whispers thus: To what purpose is all this pains? I had as good sit still. I may pray and not be heard; I may work,

and have no reward ; I may come near heaven, yet miss it, Jer. viii. 12. “ And they said, there is no hope.” Unbelief destroys hope ; and if you cut this sinew of religion, all violence for heaven ceaseth. Unbelief raiseth a cloud of despondency in the heart. Alas ! you will never be able to go through the work of religion ; so many precepts to obey ; so many temptations to resist ; so many afflictions to bear, that you will fall under the burden ; you will tire in your march to heaven. Unbelief raiseth jealous thoughts of God ; it represents him as an austere master, and that if we fail in never so little a punctilio, he will take the extremity of the law upon us. This discourageth the soul in the use of means. Unbelief doth as Sanballat and Tobiah did to the Jews, Nehem. vi. 9. “ They made us ‘ afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work.” Oh, take heed of unbelief, it destroys this holy violence. We read of Jeroboam’s arm being withered, 1 Kings xiii. 4. Unbelief withers the arm of the soul, that it cannot stretch itself forth to any spiritual action. Unbelief doth the devil the greatest kindness ; it makes way for his temptations to enter, which do so enchant and bewitch us, that we cannot work. Beware of this sin : believe the promises : God “ is good to the soul that seeks him,” Lam. iii. 25. Do but seek him with importunity, and he will open both his heart and heaven to thee.

Take heed of puzzling your thoughts about

election. A Christian may think thus: Why should I take pains? perhaps I am not elected, and then all my violence is to no purpose. Thus many are taken off from the use of means, and the business of religion is at a stand. Whereas no man can justly say, he is not elected. It is true some of God's children have said so in temptation; but as Peter in a transfiguration said he knew not what, so these in a temptation. But no man can say on just grounds he is not elected, unless he can prove that he hath sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost. For any one to assert non-election is a sin; for that which keeps him in sin, must needs be sinful: but this opinion keeps him in sin; it discourageth him from the use of means, and cuts the sinews of all endeavours; do not therefore perplex your thoughts about election; this book is sealed, and no angel can unclasp it. The rule Christians are to go by is God's revealed will, not his secret. God's revealed will is, that we should pray and repent: by this we make our calling sure; and by making our calling sure, we make our election sure. If I see the beds of spices grow and flourish, I know the sun hath been there. And if I find the fruits of obedience in my heart, I may conclude God's electing love hath shined upon me, 2 Thess. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification."

Take heed of too much violence after the

world; the world cools good affections. The earth puts out the fire. The world's silver trumpet sounds a retreat, and calls men off from their pursuit after heaven. The world hindered the young man from following Christ; "he went away sorrowful:" whereupon, saith our Saviour, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," Luke xviii. 24. Demas's religion lay buried in the earth, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." It was a saying of Pius Quintus, "When I first entered into orders, I had some good hope of my salvation; when I became a cardinal, I doubted of it; but since I came to be pope, I do even despair of it." Jonathan pursued the victory till he came at the honey comb, and then he stood still, 1 Sam. xvi. 27. Many are violent for the kingdom of God, till gain or preferment offers itself; when they meet with this honey here, they stand still. The world blinds men's eyes, that they do not see the way; and fetters their feet, that they do not run in the way of God's commandments. Mithridates, king of Pontus, being worsted by the Romans, and fearing he should not escape them, caused a great deal of silver and gold to be scattered in the ways, which, while the Roman soldiers were busy in gathering, he got away from them. The like stratagem Satan useth, knowing what tempting things riches are, he throws them in men's way, that while they are eager in ga-

thering these, he may hinder them in their pursuit of happiness. I have observed some who did once, Jehu-like, drive on furiously in the cause of religion, when the world hath come in upon them, their chariot-wheels have been pulled off, and they have driven on heavily. Were a man to climb up a steep rock, and had weights tied to his legs, they would hinder his ascent. Men's golden weights hinder them in climbing up this steep rock which leads to salvation. The world's music charms men asleep, and when they are asleep, they are not fit to work. A thing cannot be carried violently to two extremes at once. The ship cannot go full sail to the east and west at the same time: so a man cannot be violent for heaven and earth at once: he may have Christ and the world, but cannot love Christ and the world, John ii. 15. He that is all fire for the world, will be all ice for heaven. Take heed of engaging your affections too far in these secular things. Use the world as your servant, but do not follow it as your master.

Take heed of indulging any lust. Sin lived in will spoil all violence for heaven. Sin enfeebls; it is like the cutting Sampson's hair, and then the strength departs. Sin is the soul's sickness. Sickness rakes a man off his legs, and doth so despirit him, that he is unfit for any violent exercise. A sick man cannot run a race. Sin lived in, takes a man quite off from duty, or makes him dead in it. The more lively the heart is in sin, the more dead

it is in prayer. How can he be earnest with God for mercy, whose heart accuseth him of secret sin? Guilt breeds fear; and that which strengthens fear, weakens violence. Adam having sinned, was afraid, and hid himself, Gen. iii. 10. When Adam had lost his innocence, he lost his violence: therefore lay the axe to the root; let sin be hewn down; not only abstain from sin in the act, but let the love of sin be mortified, and let every sin be put to the sword. Many will leave all their sins but one; save one sin, and lose one soul. One sin is a fetter; a man may lose the race as well by having one fetter on his leg, as if he had more. I have read of that great monarch Darius, that flying from his enemy, he threw away the crown of gold on his head, that he might run the faster: so that sin which thou didst wear as a crown of gold, throw it away, that thou mayest the faster run to the heavenly kingdom.

If you would be violent for heaven, take heed of despondency of spirit. Be serious, but cheerful. He whose spirit is pressed down with sadness, is unfit to go about his work. An uncheerful heart is unfit to pray, or praise God. When the strings of a lute are wet, it will not put forth any sweet harmony. Such as go drooping under fears and discouragements, cannot be violent in religion. When a soldier faints in the field, he soon lets fall his sword. David chides himself out of his melan-

choly, Ps. xliii. 5. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope yet in God." A sad heart makes a dull action. We use the drum and the trumpet in battle, that the noise of the trumpet may excite and quicken the soldiers' spirits, and make them fight more vigorously. Cheerfulness is like music in battle; it excites a Christian's spirits, and makes him vigorous and lively in duty. What is done with cheerfulness is done with delight, and the soul flies most swiftly to heaven upon the wings of delight.

If you would be violent for heaven, take heed of a supine lazy temper. A slothful Christian is like a fearful soldier that hath a good mind to the plunder, but is loath to storm the castle; so he would fain have heaven, but is loath to take it by storm. Sloth is the soul's sleep. Many, instead of working out of salvation, sleep away salvation. Such as will not labour, must be put at last to beg; they must beg, as Dives, for one drop of water. "An idle man (saith Solomon) puts his hand in his bosom," Prov. xix. 24. He should have his hand to the plough, and he puts it in his bosom. God never made heaven an hive for drones. Sloth is a disease apt to grow upon men; shake it off. A ship that is a slug is a prey to the pirate. A sluggish soul is a prey to Satan. When the crocodile sleeps with his mouth

open, the Indian rat gets into his belly, and eats his entrails. While men are asleep in sloth, the devil enters and devours them.

Take heed of consulting with flesh and blood. As good consult with the devil as with the flesh. The flesh is a bosom traitor. An enemy within the walls is worst. The flesh cries out, There is a lion in the way. The flesh will bid thee spare thyself, as Peter did Christ: Oh be not so violent for heaven; spare thyself! The flesh saith as Judas, what needs all this waste? So, what needs all this praying and wrestling? Why dost thou waste thy strength? what needs all this waste? The flesh cries out for ease; it is loath to put its neck under Christ's yoke. The flesh is for pleasure: it had rather be gaming, than running the heavenly race. There is a description of fleshly pleasures in Amos vi. 4—6. "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, that chant to the sound of the viol; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments." These are the delights of the flesh. Such an one was he spoken of in Beard's theatre, who strove to please all his five senses at once. He bespoke a room richly hung with fair pictures; he had the most delicious music; he had all the choice aromatics and perfumes; he had all the candies and curious preserves of the confectioner; he was lodged in the bed with a beautiful courtesan; thus he indulged

the flesh, and swore that he would spend all his estate to live one week like a god, though he were sure to be damned in hell the next day. Oh take heed of holding intelligence with the flesh! The flesh is a bad counsellor. St. Paul would "not confer with flesh and blood," Gal. i. 16. The flesh is a sworn enemy to this holy violence, Rom. viii. 13. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." You have taken an oath in baptism to renounce the flesh.

Take heed of listening to the voice of such carnal friends as would call you off from this blessed violence. Fire when in snow, will soon lose its heat, and by degrees go out. Among bad company you will soon lose your heat for religion. The company of the wicked will sooner cool you, than your company will heat them. Vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine will sweeten the vinegar. How often do carnal friends the same to our souls, as infected persons do to our bodies, convey the plague. The wicked are still dissuading us from this violence; they will say, it is preciseness and singularity: as Christ's friends laid hold on him when he was going to preach, Mark iii. 21. "They went out to lay hold on him; for they said, he is beside himself." Such as are unacquainted with the spirituality and sweetness of religion, judge all zeal frenzy; and therefore will lay hold upon us to hinder us in this sacred violence. When we are earnest suitors to piety, our

carnal friends will raise some ill report of it, and so endeavour to break the match. Galeacius, marquis of Vico, being resolved for heaven, what a block in his way did he find his carnal relations! and what ado had he to break through that impediment! Take heed of a snare in your bosom. This is one of the devil's great subtilties, to hinder us from religion by our nearest relations, and so to shoot us with our own rib. He tempted Adam by his wife, Gen. iii. 6. Who would have suspected the devil there? He handed over a temptation to Job by his wife, Job ii. 9. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" What, notwithstanding all these disasters that have befallen thee, dost thou still pray, and serve God? Throw off his livery, "curse God and die." Thus would the devil have cooled Job's violence for heaven; but the shield of his faith quenched this fiery dart. Spira's friends stood in his way to heaven, for advising with them about Luther's doctrine; they persuaded him to recant, and so openly abjuring his former faith, he felt an hell in his conscience. Take heed of such tempters; resolve to hold on your violence for heaven, though your carnal friends dissuade you. It is better to go to heaven with their hatred, than to hell with their love. It was a saying of St. Jerome, 'If my parents should persuade me to deny Christ; if my mother should shew me her breasts that gave me suck; if my wife should go to charm me with her em-

braces, I would forsake all and fly to Christ. If our dearest friends alive would lie in our way to heaven, we must either leap over them, or tread upon them.

Take heed of setting up your stay in the lowest pitch of grace. He that hath the least grace, may have motion, but not violence. It is a pitiful thing to be contented with just so much grace as will keep life and soul together. A sick man may have life, but is not lively. Grace may live in the heart, but is sickly, and doth not flourish into lively acts. Weak grace will not withstand strong temptations, or carry through great sufferings; it will hardly follow Christ upon the water. Little grace will not do God much service. A tree that hath but little sap, will not have much fruit. It may be said of some Christians, that though they are not still born, yet they are starvelings in grace: they are like a ship that comes with much ado to the haven. Oh labour to grow to further degrees of sanctity! The more grace, the more strength; and the more strength, the more violence.

If you would be violent for heaven, take heed of this opinion, that it is not so hard to get the kingdom; less violence will not serve your turn. He that thinks he needs not run a race so fast, will be apt to slack his pace. This hath undone many. Who will take pains for heaven, that thinks it may be had at a cheaper rate? But if it be so easy, what needs Christ say, "Strive as in an agony." What

needed Paul beat down his body? Why doth the text speak of taking the kingdom by force? Is not conversion called a new birth? John iii. 7. a creation? Ps. li. 10. and is that easy? Oh take heed of fancying that work easy which is both above nature and against it. It is as great a wonder for a soul to be saved, as to see a mill-stone to be lift up into the middle region.

2. Use those means which will promote this holy violence.

Keep up daily prayer. Prayer is the bellows that blows up the affections; and a Christian is most active, when his affections are most violent. Prayer keeps the trade of religion a-going. Prayer is to the soul, as the animal spirits are to the body; the animal spirits make the body more agile and lively; so doth prayer the soul. That the motion of a watch may be quicker, the spring must be wound up. Christian, wind up thy heart every day by prayer. Prayer fetcheth in strength from Christ; and when his strength comes in, it sets the soul a-working. Prayer leaves the heart in a good frame; as the morning sun leaves a warmth in the room all the day after. When Christians lay aside prayer, or leave off fervency in it, then by degrees they lose their holy violence.

If you would be violent for heaven, get under lively preaching. The word is "quick and powerful," Heb. iv. 12. It puts life into a dead heart. It is both a sword to cut down sin, and a spur to

quicken grace. The word is a fire to thaw a frozen heart, Jer. xxiii. 29. "Is not my word fire?" As good almost be without preaching, as be under such preaching as will not warm. It is a part of the word, not only to inform, but to inflame, Psal. cxix. 50. "Thy word hath quickened me." It is the lively dispensation of the oracles of heaven must animate us, and make us lively in our operation.

If you would be violent for heaven, get your hearts filled with love to religion. This is like the rod of myrtle in the traveller's hand, which Pliny speaks of it; makes him fresh and lively in his travel, and keeps him from being weary. When a man hath warmed himself at the fire, now he is fittest for work. If you would be violent in working out salvation, warm yourselves at this fire of love. A man will be violent for nothing but what he loves. Why are men so eager in their pursuit after gold, but because they love it? Love causeth delight and delight causeth violence. What made St. Paul labour more than all the other apostles? "The love of Christ constrained him," 2 Cor. v. 14. Love is like oil to the wheels. Get love to religion, and you will never be weary; you will count those the best hours which are spent with God. He that digs in a silver vein sweats, yet love to the silver makes his labour delightful.

If you would be violent, be vigilant. The prophet stood upon his watch-tower, Hab. ii. 1. Why

are Christians so listless in their work, but because they are so careless in their watch. Did they but watch to see how their enemy watcheth, they would be violent to resist him. Did they but watch to see how their time runs, or rather flies, they would be violent to redeem it. Did they but watch to see how their hearts loiter in religion, they would spur on faster to heaven. The reason there is so little violence in religion, is, because there is so little vigilance. When Christians neglect their spiritual watch, and grow secure, now their motion to heaven is retarded, and Satan's motions to sin are renewed. Our sleeping time, is Satan's tempting time.

If you would be violent for the kingdom, bind your heart to God by sacred vows. A servant will be more diligent after he is bound to his master. Vow to the Lord, that by his grace you will act more vigorously in the sphere of religion, Ps. lvi. 12. "Thy vows are upon me, O God." A vow binds the votary to duty. He looks upon himself now as under a special obligation, and that quickens endeavour. No question but a Christian may make such a vow, because the ground of it is morally good; he vows nothing but what he is bound to do, namely, to walk more closely with God. Only remember, that we vow not in our own strength, but Christ's. We must confide in him as well for strength as righteousness. Isa. xlv. 24. "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength.

If you would be violent for heaven, be sure you make going to heaven your business. What a man looks on as a thing by the by, he will never be violent for; but that which he makes his business, he will be industrious about. A man looks upon his trade as the only thing to get a livelihood by, and he follows it close: so if we would but look upon religion as the main business wherein our salvation is concerned, we should be violent in it, Luke x. 42. "But one thing is needful." This is the one thing, to get Christ and heaven; this is the end we came into the world for. If we could thus look upon the things of eternity as our business, the one thing, how earnest should we be in the pursuit of them.

If you would be violent, have heaven continually in your eye. This made Christ violent to the death; he had an eye to the joy set before him, Heb. xii. 2. Set the crown ever before you, and that will provoke endeavour. Glory hath an immense spur. The mariner hath his hand to the stern, and his eye to the star. While we are working, let us have an eye to that place where is Christ the bright morning star. How willingly doth a man wade through a deep water, that sees the dry land before him, and is sure to be crowned as soon as he comes at shore! Every time you cast your eyes up to heaven, think, above that starry heaven is the empyrean heaven I am striving for. Thus did Moses; the eye of his

faith quickened the feet of his obedience, Heb. xi. 26. "He looked to the recompence of reward." When Christians lose their prospect of heaven, then they begin to slacken their pace in the way thither.

If you would be violent for the kingdom, accompany with such as be violent. When we want fire, we use to go to our neighbour's hearth and fetch fire. Often be among the godly, and so you shall fetch some heat and quickening from them, Ps. cxix. 63. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." Good company quickens. The holy discourse and example of one saint, doth whet and sharpen another. The saints never go so fast to heaven, as when they go in company. One Christian helps forward another. In other races that are run, many times one hinders another; but in this race to heaven, one Christian helps forward another, 1 Thess. v. 11. "Edify one another, even as also ye do." Oh let not this article of our creed be forgotten, The Communion of Saints.

If you would be violent, never leave till you have the Spirit. Desire of God to put forth the sweet violence of his Spirit; the spouse begged a gale of the Spirit, Cant. iv. 16. "Awake O north wind, blow O south." When God's Spirit blows upon us, now we go full sail to heaven. When the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels, then they moved, Ezek. i. 21. The wheels of our endeavour move apace, when the Spirit of God

is in these wheels. Seeing there are so many violent winds of temptation blowing us backward, we had need have the violent wind of God's Spirit blowing us forward to heaven. Let this suffice to have spoken of the means for this holy violence.

But may some say, we have used this violence for heaven, what remains for us to do? As the people said to Christ, Luke i. 13. "What shall we do?"

You that have been violent for heaven (aged Christians) let me beseech you still to keep alive this holy violence. Not only keep up duty, but violence in duty. Remember, you have that corruption within you, which is ready to abate this blessed violence. The brightest coal hath those ashes growing on it, as are apt to choke the fire. You have those inbred corruptions, that like ashes, are ready to choke the fire of your zeal. How was Peter's grace cooled when he denied Christ! The church of Ephesus lost her keen edge of religion, Rev. ii. 4. Take heed of declining in your affections. Be not like a body in an atrophy: be most violent at last. A stone, the nearer it is to the centre, the more violent it is in its motion. You have but a little time now to work for God, therefore work the harder. Be like the church of Thyatira, her "last works were more than her first," Rev. ii. 19. Be as the sun that shines brightest before its setting; as the swan that sings

sweetest before its death, Rom. xiii. 11. "Your salvation is nearer than when you believed." If your salvation be nearer, your violence should be greater. How should you quicken your pace, when you are within sight of the kingdom! He is a happy man, of whom it may be said spiritually, as of Moses literally, before his death, Deut. xxxiv. 7. "His eyes waxed not dim, and his natural force was not abated." So a Christian's force and violence for heaven is not abated: he keeps the best wine of his life till last.

Here is a strong consolation to the violent Christian. Thou art in the way to the kingdom. Though perhaps thou hast not a bunch of grapes in the way, (I mean that joy which some meet with,) yet it is happy that thou art in the way. Bless God that while some lie in the total neglect of duty, God hath given thee a heart to seek him, Ps. cv. iii. "Let the hearts of them rejoice that seek the Lord." Nay, God hath not only given thee a heart to do duty, but to do duty mixed with love, which makes it savory meat, and to do duty stamped with fervency, which makes it pass current with God. Oh bless God who hath raised thee off the bed of sloth, and stirred up the zeal of thy soul for heaven. He who hath made thee violent, will make thee victorious. Wait a while, and thou shalt be possessed of a kingdom. When Moses went up to receive God's commands, he staid six days on the mount, and

on the seventh God called to him, *Exod. xxiv. 16.* Though we wait long, and have not the thing waited for, yet let us continue doing our duty: shortly God will call us from heaven, “Come up hither,” and we shall go from the mount of faith to the mount of vision, and behold those glorious things which “eye hath not seen, nor can it enter into man’s heart to conceive.”

But, may a child of God say, I fear I am none of those violent ones that shall take heaven: I find such a deadness of heart in duty, that I question whether I shall ever arrive at the kingdom.

This deadness of the heart may arise from natural causes. Weakness of body may occasion indisposition of mind. Thy prayer may be weak because thy body is weak. A lute that is cracked cannot send forth so sweet a sound as if it were whole.

This indisposition of soul perhaps is only casual and for a time; it may be in a deep fit of melancholy, or in desertion. When the sun is gone from our climate, the earth is, as it were, in desertion, and the trees are without blossom or fruit; but this is only for a time. Let but the sun return again in spring, and now the herbs flourish, and the trees put forth their fruit; so when God hides his face, there is a deadness upon a Christian’s heart; he prays as if he prayed not. But let the Sun of righteousness return, now he is

divinely animated, and is as vigorous and lively in his operations as ever; he now recovers his first love: therefore, thou weak Christian, be not discouraged, so long as thou dost not allow thyself in thy distemper: a dead heart is thy burden; look up to Christ thy high priest who is merciful to bear thy infirmities, and is mighty to help them.

THE HAPPINESS OF
DRAWING NEAR TO GOD.



PSALM lxxiii. 28.

But it is good for me to draw near to God.

THIS Psalm is no less elegant than sacred ; it is calculated for the meridian of God's church in all times ; but especially it is fit for the godly to meditate upon in times of calamity. It is entitled " A Psalm of Asaph." Asaph was a man divinely inspired, a prophet, as also one of the masters of music ; it is called " A Psalm of St. Asaph," either because he composed it, or because it was committed to him to sing. This holy man here seems to have a dialogue with himself concerning providence. He was ready to call God's providences to the bar of reason, and inquire the equity of them. How doth it seem just, that they who are evil should enjoy so much good, and those who are good should endure so much evil ? While Asaph was debating the case with himself, at last his faith got above his sense ; he considered that the

wicked were set in slippery places ; and, like such as go upon the ice, their feet would soon slide ; or, like such as walk on mines of powder, they would soon be blown up ; verse 18. This both resolved his doubt and composed his spirit.

The introduction into the Psalm is not to be forgotten, “Truly God is good to Israel ;” so the Hebrew renders it “certainly.” Without dispute, this as a golden maxim must be held. In the Septuagint it is *vox admirantis* ; it is set out by way of admiration, “O how good is God to Israel !” what angel in heaven can express ! The Vulgate reads it, *veruntanem*, yet God is good ; as if the Psalmist had said, Though the candle of prosperity shines on the wicked, they have not only what their hearts can wish, but “more than their heart can wish,” verse 7. And though the godly are sorely afflicted, mingling their drink with weeping ; yet for all this, “God is good to Israel.” Here is the fountain, the stream, the cistern : the fountain, God ; the stream, goodness ; the cistern into which it runs, Israel. Indeed, “God is good to all,” Psal. cxlv. 9. The sweet dew falls upon the thistle as well as the rose. But though God be good to all, yet not alike good to all. He is good to Israel in a special manner. The wicked have sparing mercy, but the godly have saving mercy. And if God be good to his people, then it is good for his people to draw near to him. So it is in the text, “It is good for me to draw near to God.”

1. We may look upon the words in *hypothesi*. Here is something implied, viz. that by nature we are far off from God. Drawing near implies a strangeness and distance. In our lapsed estate we lost two things, the image of God, and communion with God. Ps. lviii. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb." Every step a sinner takes, is going further from God. The prodigal's going into a far country, (Luke xv. 14.) was an emblem of the sinner's going afar off from God. How far are they distant from God, who have been travelling forty or fifty years from their father's house! and, which is worse, sinners are not only far from God, but they do not desire to be near him, Jer. iv. 10. "They have loved to wander." Sin doth not care to be near holiness. The wicked get as far as they can from God, like Cain, who "went out from the presence of the Lord," (Gen. iv. 16.) that is, the church of God, where were the visible signs of God's presence; he estranged himself from God as much as he could: he fell to building, therefore thinking to drown the noise of his conscience, as the Italians of old were wont to drown the noise of thunder by ringing their bells. Sinners think God's company may be best spared, Isa. xxx. 11. "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Let us shut God out of our company; let him be no more named among us. A bad eye loves not to be near the sun.

Let us be deeply humbled for our fall in Adam, which hath set us at such a distance from the blessed God. Heaven and earth are not so far asunder as God and the sinner. The further we are from God, the nearer we are to hell. The further a man sails from the east, the nearer he is to the west. Let us think of returning to **God** by repentance. Say as the church, Hos. ii. 7. "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

2. Let us consider the text affirmatively "It is good for me to draw near to God."

The text falls into these parts: 1. The person, me. 2. The act, draw near. 3. The object, God. 4. The excellency of the act, it is good.

The proposition is this: That it is a great duty incumbent upon Christians to draw near to God, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart." For the illustration of the proposition, four things are to be inquired into. 1. How we are capable of drawing near to God. 2. Where we draw near to God. 3. The manner of our drawing near to God. 4. Why we must draw near to God.

1. How we are capable of drawing near to God. By nature we stand in opposition to God, (Col. i. 21.) "alienated and enemies." How then can we approach nigh to God? It is through a Mediator Out of Christ, God "is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. But Jesus Christ is the screen

between us and divine justice. Christ, as our high-priest, assumes our flesh. Christ's flesh is called a "vail," Heb. x. 20. As Moses when his face shone so exceeding bright, put a vail upon it, and then Israel might approach near to him, and look upon him; so Christ having veiled himself with our human nature, we may now draw nigh to God and behold him.

And as Christ makes way for us into the holy of holies by his incarnation, so by his crucifixion; he died to make God and us friends. The divine law being infringed, God's justice was provoked, and satisfaction demanded, before we could approach to God in an amicable way. Now here Christ, as our priest, shed his blood for our sins, and so made the atonement, Col. i. 20. "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." As Joseph being so great at court, made way for all his brethren to draw near into the king's presence, (Gen. xlvii. 2.) so Jesus Christ is our Joseph, that doth make way for us by his blood, that we may draw near, and touch the top of the sceptre.

2. Where can we draw near to God? In the use of his ordinances. In the word we draw near to his holy oracle; in the sacrament we draw near to his table. In the one we hear his voice; in the other we have his kiss. Besides, we do in a special manner draw near to God in prayer. Prayer is the soul's private converse and inter-

course with God. Prayer whispers in God's ears, Ps. xviii. 6. "My prayer came before him, even into his ears." In prayer we draw so nigh to God, that we "take hold of him," Isa. lxiv. 6. God draws nigh to us by his Spirit, and we draw nigh to him in prayer.

3. The manner of our drawing near to God. God's special residence is in heaven, and we draw near to God, not by the feet of our bodies, but our souls. The affections are the feet of the soul; by these we move towards God. David drew nigh to God in his desires, Ps. lxxiii. 25. "There is none on earth I desire besides thee." He did shoot his heart into heaven by pious ejaculations. Spirits may have intercourse at a distance.

4. Why we must draw near to God. Because he is our Maker; in him we live. He hath given us our bodies; they are his curious needle-work, Ps. cxxxix. 15. And as he hath wrought the cabinet, so he hath put the jewel in it, the precious soul; and surely if we had our being from him, we cannot breathe without him: there is a good reason we should draw near to him in a way of homage and observance.

God is our benefactor; he crowns us with variety of blessings; he gives health and estate: every bid of bread we eat is reached to us by the hand of divine bounty; is there not great reason we should draw near to him that feeds us? Give a beast provender, and he will follow you all the

field over. Not to draw near to him who is our benefactor is worse than brutish.

God is the chief good. There is enough in God to satisfy the immense desire of the angels. He is the quintessence of sweetness; in him all perfections are concentrated, wisdom, holiness, goodness: he hath rivers of pleasure, where the soul shall bathe itself for ever with infinite delight, Ps. xxxvi. So that here is ground sufficient for our drawing near to God; he is the chief good. Every thing desires to approach to its happiness.

1. See the right genius and temper of a gracious soul: it is ever drawing near to God: it loves to converse with him in private. A person truly regenerate is not able to stay away long from God, Ps. lxxiii. 8. "My soul followeth hard after God." A pious soul cannot but draw near to God.

Out of the entire love which he bears to God. It is the nature of love to draw the heart to the object loved.

He that loves his friend will often give him a visit: he that loves God will visit him. The heart ascends to God in a fiery chariot of love.

A gracious soul cannot but draw near to God, because of the intimate relation between God and him. God is a father, Isa. lxiv. 8. "Doubtless thou art our Father." Doth not the child delight to draw near to his father? No father like to God for love: his children shall never want:

he hath land enough to give to all his heirs. He loves his children so entirely, that he will never disinherit them. How then can believers keep away from their Father? they know not how to be long out of his presence.

A gracious soul cannot choose but draw near to God, because he hath found so much sweetness and content in it. While he hath drawn near to God, he hath drawn virtue from him. Never did Jonathan taste so much sweetness when he dipped his rod in the honey-comb, (1 Sam. xiv. 27.) as the soul finds in communion with God. In drawing near to God, a Christian's heart hath been warmed and melted; the Lord hath kindled his sacrifice from heaven. In his approaches to God, he hath had the illapses of the Spirit, the incomes of God's love, the prelibations of glory: God hath given him a bunch of grapes by the way; he hath tasted that the Lord is good; no wonder then he is so frequent in his approaches to the Divine Majesty: he hath found the comfort of drawing near to God.

2. It reproves them, who instead of drawing near to God, draw near to the world. The world engrosseth all their time and thoughts, Phil. iii. 19. "Who mind earthly things." A good Christian useth the world for his necessity, but his main work is to draw near to God. Whoever he compounds with, and pays short, he will be sure God

shall not be a loser. He gives God a daily sacrifice; "he follows God fully," Numb. xiv. 14. But covetous persons make the world their treasure; and what is their treasure, that doth most command their hearts? Worldlings live by sense; and to talk to them of drawing nigh to God, is to speak riddles and paradoxes to them. They can no more live out of the earth, than the fish out of the water. They have the serpent's curse upon them, to lick the dust. Things of a worldly aspect draw away the heart from God. They are reins of hope, (as Tertullian saith,) they hinder our passage to the holy land. Had not the fall beat off men's head-piece of wisdom, they would think thus with themselves; If there be any beauty in the world, what is there in God that made it? he gives the flower its colour and odour; he gives the diamond its lustre; he gives food its delicious taste; and if there be such sweetness in creatures, what is there in God? he is infinitely better than all. Shall these poor things draw off your hearts from God? shall the drop draw us from the fountain? shall the light of the taper draw us from the sun? shall we admire the gift, and forget the giver? Solomon speaks of a generation of men, "madness is in their heart." Eccles. ix. 3. Sure they who draw near the world, and leave God, "madness is in their hearts." Oh how empty and insignificant are all other things

without God! they are in their matter earthly; in their procuring painful; in their fruition surfeiting; in their duration dying; in their operation damning.

2. It reproves them who draw nigh to God, but it is hypocritically; they draw nigh with their lips, but not with their heart, Isa. xxix. 13. The Jews (saith one) use great shews of adoration, and in their synagogues burn lamps to the honour of God, but no inward devotion can be perceived. What is pomp without piety? Sinners give God the worship of their bodies, but keep their hearts for something else they love better. The heart is a virgin God himself is suitor to, Prov. xxiii. 6. "My son give me thy heart." To draw near to God with the body, but not the heart, is to abuse God. It is as if one should come into an apothecary's shop, and ask for cordial water, and he should give him an empty glass. To draw nigh to God without an heart, is to play a devotion, and to go to hell covered with religion's mantle.

3. It reproves them, who, instead of drawing near to God, draw back from God: these are renegadoes! they once seemed to put forth fair blossoms, and gave good hope of their conversion, but their spring is changed to autumn. Either fear of persecution, or hope of preferment hath turned them away from the profession of religion. Such

were Belseucus, Petrus Carolus, and others. Hosea viii. 3. "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good." At Ausborough the Papists gave ten florins a year to such as revolt from the protestant faith. Men draw back from God, because they never had the Spirit of God to confirm them. Such as have the Spirit's indwelling, never take their final leave of God. The Spirit in the heart is called an earnest, not a pawn. A pawn may be called for again, and taken away, but an earnest remains, and is part of the sum behind. Oh how odious is it to draw back from God! The name Judas is had in abomination at this day. Sure no protestant would baptize his child Judas. And how dismal was his end! he who had no bowels to an innocent Christ, his bowels gushed out. If it be good to draw near to God, it must needs be evil to draw back from him, Ps. xxxvii. 27. "Thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from thee."

4. It exhorts us all to draw near to God. It is more ingenious to draw near to God voluntarily, than to be drawn near to him by affliction. God is the *terminus ad quem*; Whither should the soul go but to God? Where can the bee rest but in its hive? To draw near to God is as well a privilege as a duty. There are but two motives I shall use to persuade to this drawing near to God.

1. The first is in the text ; to draw near to God is a good thing. It is good for me. That it is good, appears several ways.

To draw near to God, is our wisdom. "The price of wisdom is above rubies," Job xxviii. 18. No jewel we wear doth so adorn us as wisdom ; and wherein is our wisdom seen more than in our appropinquation to God ? It is judged wisdom to keep in with great men, Prov. xix. 6. "Many will intreat the favour of the prince." A prince's love is mutable. How often doth the sun-shine of his royal favour set in a cloud. But it is wisdom to draw near to God ; he is the sweetest friend, and the sorest enemy.

To draw near to God is our honour. It is counted an honour to converse with noble personages. What an high dignity is it, that the great God will suffer sinful dust to draw near to him ! Surely the apostle did speak it with an holy boasting, 1 John i. 3. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus :" as if he had said, we do not walk with the pedantics of the world ; we are of the blood-royal of heaven ; we live above other men ; "our fellowship is with the Father," That the King of kings will hold forth a golden sceptre to us, invite and welcome us into his presence, and bid us draw near • this is no small favour, 1 Sam. xxii. 2. "Every one that was distressed and in debt, drew near to David,

and he became a captain over them." So that we who are distressed and in debt, may draw near to God; and that he will not only be our captain, but our "husband," Isa. liv. 5. What transcendent dignity is this! It is a wonder God doth not kick us out of his presence; but that we should be admitted to see the king's face, and that he should send us dainties off from his own table, is an honour fitter for angels than men.

To draw near to God is our safety. God is a "strong tower," Prov. xviii. 10. It is good in times of danger to draw near to a fort or castle, Hab. iii. 4. "He had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power." The horns coming out of God's hands, are to push his enemies; and the hiding of his power, is to safeguard his people. God is an impregnable strong hold. Indeed there is no safety, but in drawing nigh to God. If the sheep straggles from the fold, it is in danger of the wolf: if we straggle and wander from God, we are in danger of Satan.

To draw near to God is our peace. The only thing which breaks our peace, is, when we do not keep close to God: but what harmony; yea heaven is in the soul when it draws nigh to God! Ps. cxix. 165. "Great peace have they that love thy law." This peace, like pearl in broth, is cordial. David drew nigh to God, for he was "ever

with him," Ps. cxxxix. 17. And this made his pillow soft when he went to sleep, Ps. iv. 8. "I will lay me down in peace;" as the honey-dew falls upon the leaf. Oh that sweet serenity which drops as honey upon the soul, while it is drawing nigh to God! How comfortable is it to draw near the sun! and how sweet is it to approach nigh to the Sun of Righteousness.

To draw near to God is our riches. It is good drawing near a golden mine. If we draw near to God, he will enrich us with promises, and divine consolations; he will enrich us with the "pearl of price," Ephes. iii. 8. He will reward us as a king, yea as a God. He will make over his land and jewels to us; he will give us the spring flowers of joy here, and the harvest of glory hereafter.

If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us. If we draw near to him in duty, he will draw near to us in mercy. When the prodigal approached to his father, his father drew near to him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, Luke xv. 20. If we draw near to God with repenting hearts, he will draw near to us with a compassionate heart. David prayed, (Ps. lxxix. 18.) "Draw nigh to my soul." It is good to have God draw nigh to us. How sweet is his presence! He is light to the eye, joy to the heart. How happy was it for Zaccheus, when Christ drew near to

him ! “ This day is salvation come to thy house,” Luke xix. 9. When God draws near to the soul, heaven and salvation draw near.

2. There is a time coming, when we shall wish we had drawn near to God. We are shortly drawing near to our grave, Psa. cvii. 18. “ They draw near unto the gates of death.” The wicked who care not for God, yet at death they would draw near to him. Then they cry, as Matt. viii. 25. “ Lord save us or we perish ;” then ‘ Mercy, mercy.’ Then run to God in distress, as in a storm men run to a tree for shelter : but God will not shelter his enemies. The Lord gives the sinner abundance of mercy in his life time, (as you have seen a loving father bribing a prodigal son with money to see if he can reclaim him,) but if the sinner be not wrought upon with mercy, then at death the sun of mercy sets, and a dark night of wrath overtakes the sinner. They who would not draw nigh to God as a friend, God will draw nigh to them as an enemy.

How shall we do to draw near to God :

Let us contemplate the excellences of God. “ He is the “ God of glory,” (Psa. xxix. 3.) full of orient beauty : in comparison of whom both angels and men are but as the ‘ small dust of the balance.’ He is the “ God of love,” (2 Cor. xiii. 11.) who triumphs in acts of mercy. Well may this encourage our approaches to him who delights to

display the banner of free grace to sinners. If we should hear of a person of honour, who was of a lovely disposition, obliging all that came to him by acts of kindness and civility, it would make us ambitiously desirous to ingratiate ourselves with him, and get into his acquaintance. God is the most sovereign good, the wonder of love, ready to diffuse the silver streams of his bounty to indigent creatures; this, if any thing, will make us willing to draw near to him, and acquiesce in him as the centre of felicity.

If we would draw near to God, let us study our own wants. Let us consider in what need we stand of God, and that we cannot be happy without him. The prodigal never drew near to his father, till he began to be in want, Luke xv. A proud sinner who was never convinced of his want, minds not to come near God; he hath a stock of his own to live upon, Jer. ii. 31. "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." A full stomach despiseth the honey-comb. It is the sense of want brings us near to God. Why did so many lame and paralytical resort to Christ, but because they wanted a cure. Why doth the thirsty man draw near a fountain, but because he wants water. Why doth a condemned man draw near his prince, but because he wants a pardon. When a poor soul reviews its wants, I want grace, I want the favour of God, I am damned without

Christ; this makes him draw near to God, and be an earnest suppliant for mercy.

If we would draw near to God, let it be our care to clear our interest in God, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith." When we know him to be our God, then we draw near to him. The spouse, by virtue of the conjugal union, draws near to her husband, Ps. xlviii. 14. "This God is our God."

Let us beg the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God hath a magnetical virtue. Corruption draws the heart from God; the Spirit draws it to him, Cant. i. 4. "Draw me, we will run after thee." The Spirit, by his omnipotent grace, draws the heart to God not only sweetly, but powerfully.

Let us get our hearts fired with love to God: which way the love goes, that way the heart is drawn. If God be the treasure delighted in, our hearts will be drawn to him. Servile fear makes the soul fly from God; sacred love makes it fly to him.

